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SACRED HISTORY,

SELECTED FROM

THE SCRIPTURES;

WITH

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS,

PARTICULARLY CALCULATED

TO FACILITATE THE STUDY

OF THE

Holy Scriptures

IN

SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES.

SEVENTH EDITION.

VOL. V.

BY MRS. TRIMMER.

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SECTION I.

PASSAGES OF THE PROPHECIES RELATING TO THE
NEW COVENANT.

From Jeremiah, Chap. xxxi. Zechariah, xiii. Isaiah, xii.

I. BEHOLD the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a NEW COVENANT with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

Not according to the COVENANT that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt (which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD):

But this shall be the COVENANT that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the LORD: I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people:

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and will remember their sin no more.

II. In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.

III. And in that day thou shalt say, I will give thanks unto thee, O JEHOVAH; for though thou hast been angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou hast comforted me.

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for my strength and my song is JEHOVAH, and He is become unto me, salvation.

And when ye shall draw waters from the fountains of salvation, in that day ye shall say, Give ye thanks to JEHOVAH; call upon his name; make known among the people his mighty deeds; record ye how highly his name is exalted.

Sing ye to JEHOVAH; for he hath wrought a stupendous work; this is made manifest in all the earth. Cry aloud, and shout for joy, O inhabitants of Sion; for great in the midst of thee is the Holy One of Israel.

The extracts from the Prophecy of Isaiah are according to the New Translation by Bishop Lowth.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The first of these predictions, which is taken from the book of Jeremiah, expressly declares, that the LORD would make a *New Covenant* with the *House of Israel*, not of a *temporal* but of a *spiritual* nature; not written on tables of stone, but imprinted on the hearts of all faithful people; and that He would grant them remission of sins, and maintain a spiritual intercourse with them.

The second extract is from Zechariah, and, like the last, promises remission of sins.

The third is a hymn of praise, excellently calculated to express the thankfulness of those who should thus obtain salvation by Divine grace.

It is to be remarked, that this stupendous work was to be performed by the same ALMIGHTY BEING, who had wrought such wonders in behalf of Israel; namely, the great JEHOVAH.

It was foreknown to JEHOVAH that the Jewish Church would be greatly corrupted, destitute of religious cultivation, and in good works unfruitful. He therefore resolved

resolved to send a messenger to prepare their hearts for the reception of the Divine doctrine of the MESSIAH, and made known His intention by the prophets Isaiah and Malachi.

SECTION II.

PASSAGES OF THE PROPHECIES RELATING TO THE
FORERUNNER OF THE MESSIAH.

From Isaiah, Chap. xl.—Malachi, iii. iv.

I. A VOICE crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of JEHOVAH!—Make straight in the desert a highway for our God!

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places a smooth plain.

And the glory of JEHOVAH shall be revealed; and all flesh shall see together the salvation of our God, for the mouth of JEHOVAH hath spoken it.

II. Behold, I will send my Messenger: and he shall prepare the way before me: and the LORD whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his Temple; even the messenger of the Covenant which ye delight in, saith the LORD of Hosts.

But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap.

And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

And I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not ME, saith the LORD of Hosts.

For I am the LORD; I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

III. For behold the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall.

Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb, for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was the custom of the Eastern monarchs, whenever they entered upon an expedition, or took a journey, especially through desert and uncultivated countries, to send harbingers before them to prepare all things for their passage, and pioneers to level the ways, and remove all impediments. In the first of the extracts in this Section, the prophet, in allusion to this custom, intimates, that a harbinger would be sent in like manner,

to remove every obstruction, and make the way, or doctrines, straight and plain for those who should be willing to become followers of the LORD JEHOVAH.

The second of these predictions was written by Malachi, who is supposed to have lived about the latter end of the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. He was the last of the prophets under the Mosaic dispensation, and with him was closed the wonderful series of prophecies, which had gradually been vouchsafed to support the faith and religion of the servants of JEHOVAH, and to serve as a testimony to the MESSIAH, when He should appear upon earth.

The prophet foretold that a harbinger would be sent; and that the LORD himself would suddenly come to His Temple, in order to refine and purify His people and His priests, but that he would not totally consume them on account of His Covenant with their fathers. From which circumstance (of their being spared) they might know the LORD that should come, to be the same who had originally made this Covenant with the house of Israel.

In the third extract, which is from another chapter in Malachi, the prophet foretold that there would be a great and terrible day of the LORD, in which all the wicked should be consumed; but at the same time he intimated that universal conversion of heart at the preaching of Elijah the prophet, would prevent the curse from coming to smite the earth, and that the faithful servants of JEHOVAH should be effectually preserved, even if it did come.

With a solemnity becoming the last of the prophets, Malachi closed the holy canon by enjoining the strict observance of the law of Moses, till the forerunner already promised should appear in the spirit and power of

Elijah, to introduce the MESSIAH, and begin a new and everlasting dispensation *.

We shall soon see this prediction concerning the fore-runner of the MESSIAH fulfilled.

SECTION III.

AN ANGEL SENT TO ZACHARIAS.—THE BIRTH OF JOHN FORETOLD.

From Luke, Chap. i.

THERE WAS, in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the LORD, blameless. And they had no child, and they were both now well stricken in years.

And it came to pass, that while Zacharias executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the LORD.

And the whole multitude of the people were praying without, at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the LORD, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many

* Dr. Smith's Summary View.

shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the LORD, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his birth.

And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the LORD their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the LORD.

And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

And behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; for he beckoned unto them and remained speechless.

And it came to pass that as soon as the days of his administration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

And when his wife Elisabeth found that she should bear a son, she said, Thus hath the LORD dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

There were twenty-four families of Priests, who descended from *Eleazar* and *Ithamar*, the sons of *Aaron*; these, by the appointment of *David*, were to officiate in the Temple in their turns, a week at a time. *Abia* (or *Abijah*, as he is called in the book of Chronicles) was the eighth in rank. It was customary for the Priests to burn incense on the golden altar every morning; whilst the people, who assembled in the courts of the Temple, offered their private devotions. At the time when *Zacharias* had his wonderful vision, Israel suffered great oppression from the Romans, and *Herod* governed very tyrannically; it is therefore likely that both Priest and People were intreating the LORD to send them deliverance, and hasten the kingdom of the MESSIAH.

From the Prophecy of *Malachi** the Jews supposed that *Elijah* would be restored to life before the coming of the MESSIAH; but the angel who appeared to *Zacharias* explained this prediction to signify, one inspired with the spirit and invested with the power of *Elijah*; animated with the same zeal for reformation, and greatly resembling this famous prophet of the Jews, not only in his office but in his manner of life.

Malachi also foretold, and the *Angel* confirmed the prediction, that the *Harbinger* of the MESSIAH should have such success in his ministry, as to convert many both of the rising and declining age, to that real piety which would endear and bind them to each other, and prevent the disagreements which frequently arose in families from the various religious sects amongst the Jews: and that it should be his peculiar business to

* See Section ii.

raise in their minds an expectation of the MESSIAH, and a disposition to welcome him when he should appear.

When *Zacharias* returned to his own house, he and his wife *Elisabeth* passed their time in religious retirement, waiting for the completion of the divine promise.

Zacharias was a man of such an exemplary character as to be styled *righteous* by the Evangelist; yet he offended God, and brought a heavy punishment upon himself. His tongue was struck dumb, for requiring a farther proof of the truth of the divine promises, when an Angel was sent from heaven to deliver them to him. For this instance, Christians should learn to receive with faith all the promises of the Gospel, and in particular to believe what was said by the Angel to *Zacharias* concerning John the Baptist.

SECTION IV.

PASSAGES OF THE PROPHECIES, RELATING TO THE MESSIAH.

From Jeremiah, Chap. xxiii. — Isaiah, vii. ix.

I. BEHOLD, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is the name by which he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

II. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

III. Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and

his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end; upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment, henceforth and for ever; the zeal of the LORD OF HOSTS will perform this.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

When the diadem and crown were taken from the king of Judah, they were, according to the prophet Ezekiel*, only laid aside till HE should come, whose right they were, that is to say, a *righteous prince of the house of David*; and the expectation of such a prince was kept up by various predictions; the first extract in this Section is one of them, taken from the book of Jeremiah. We here find that *salvation* was promised to the house of Judah by this Prince; and that he was to be to them a MEDIATOR for whose sake they should be esteemed *righteous*.

That no impostor might obtrude himself on the world as this *king* and *mediator*, a variety of circumstances were foretold which would distinguish him from all mankind. These, as we shall have occasion to observe, were all fulfilled in our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

The second extract foretold the birth of a child in such a miraculous manner, as would plainly point him out to the world as the *promised seed of the woman*, who had been hoped for from the Fall.

The third extract mentions further particulars concerning this extraordinary child, and shews that he would be distinguished from all mankind by various

* Chap. xxi. 25, 26, 27.

titles, which could belong to *one* alone; and that his kingdom would be of universal extent and eternal duration. Our first business is to enquire whether HE, whom we regard as our LORD and SAVIOUR, was born in the miraculous manner foretold by the prophet.

SECTION V.

AN ANGEL SENT TO THE VIRGIN MARY, TO FORE-
TEL THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

From Luke, Chap. i.

AND in the sixth month after Elisabeth was assured that she should have a son, the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man, whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the LORD is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God, and behold, thou shalt bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the LORD God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.

And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this thing be? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the

the Highest shall overshadow thee : therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.

And behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she also will bear a son in her old age, for with God nothing shall be impossible.

And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah, and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

And it came to pass that when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, she was filled with the Holy Ghost. And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou amongst women.

And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me ? and blessed is she that believed : for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour ; for he hath regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden : for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

For he that is mighty hath done to me great things, for holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

He hath shewed strength with his arm, he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his
servant

servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever.

And Mary abode with her cousin about three months, and returned to her own house.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was customary for the Jewish women to be betrothed or engaged to their husbands, some time before they were actually married. The *Virgin Mary* was under this kind of engagement to *Joseph*, and had not lived with him as his wife when the heavenly messenger appeared to her. The agreement between the prediction of the angel and that of the prophets in the last Section, is too obvious to need a comment.

The manner in which Mary received the Angel's salutation shews, that she had great modesty and humility of mind, and did not think herself worthy of such applause and congratulation; but she soon understood from the Angel's discourse, that she was chosen to be the *Mother of the MESSIAH*, and that his birth would be miraculously effected by the immediate power of God, in a way which had hitherto been unknown, and which would distinguish this Child from all that had ever been born. It was expressly declared to her, that he should be called the SON OF THE HIGHEST: and to confirm her faith, the Angel assured her, that her cousin *Elisabeth* would also have a child, though her advanced age rendered such an event, according to the usual course of things, incredible. *Mary*, convinced that nothing was impossible with God, joyfully accepted the honour appointed her; and though she knew, that having a child before she was married would endanger the loss of her reputation, and even her life, she humbly resigned

signed them both to the divine care and protection ; but, being desirous of conferring with *Elisabeth* to whom the *Angel* had referred her, she went to the city where her cousin dwelt. The congratulation which *Mary* received from *Elisabeth* was so exactly similar to that which the *Angel* pronounced, that she was satisfied the *SPIRIT of the LORD* had dictated it ; and, in a transport of holy joy, she acknowledged her sense of God's wonderful condescension, in that beautiful hymn we have just read ; in which there is great resemblance to the song of *Hannah*, and other passages in the *Old Testament*.

Mary, on account of her being the *Mother of our LORD*, is usually styled the *blessed Virgin* ; and she certainly deserves the epithet, for a greater honour and blessing she could not receive in this world : but this circumstance could only increase her *earthly* happiness in proportion to her *faith* ; her future beatitude in heaven depended, like that of other Christians, on her obedience to the will of God, and belief in the *MES-SIAH* ; therefore paying divine honours to the *Virgin Mary* is as great idolatry as that practised by the Jews of old, who were so severely reprov'd by the Prophet *Jeremiah* * for worshipping the *Queen of Heaven*.

But we certainly should regard the blessed *Virgin* as a woman of most exemplary character, and hold her in the highest estimation *short of adoration*, on account of her having been made so instrumental to the happiness of mankind ; and we should follow her example of humility, piety, and faith, on every occasion that admits of our doing so. Nothing could be more unlikely, according to the common course of nature, than that the *Virgin*

* Jer. xlv.

Mary should be the *mother* of the *Messiah*; yet she believed that she should have this distinguished honour, because it was graciously promised; and afterwards, when her faith was farther confirmed by the prophetic exclamation of her cousin *Elisabeth*, she entertained no proud or arrogant thoughts of her own merits, but ascribed all the glory to God, and regarded the choice *He* had made of one in her humble station, as a fulfilment of those divine promises given so many years before to *Abraham*; and indeed it must be regarded in this light by all who carefully compare the one with other*.

SECTION VI.

THE BIRTH AND CIRCUMCISION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

From Luke, Chap. i.

AND *Elisabeth* brought forth a son; and her neighbours and her cousins heard how the *LORD* had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.

And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him *Zacharias*, after the name of his father: and his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called *John*.

And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name; and they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.

And he asked † for a writing-table, and wrote, saying, His name is *John*. And they marvelled all: And

* See a Comment upon *Mary's Hymn*, in my *Companion to the Book of Common Prayer*.

† By signs.

his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake and praised God.

And fear came on all that dwelt round about them : and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill-country of Judea.

And all they that had heard them, laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be ? And the hand of the LORD was with him.

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David ;

As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began : that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us ; to perform the mercy promised to our forefathers, and to remember his holy covenant :

The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness, and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest : for thou shalt go before the face of the LORD, to prepare his ways ; to give knowledge of the salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins.

Through the tender mercy of our God : whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We here find that the prediction of the *Angel* was fulfilled to *Zacharias* and *Elisabeth* by their having a son in their old age. There were so many wonderful circumstances attending the birth of *John*, that it naturally occasioned great astonishment in the minds of all who heard of them; and as he grew up, it evidently appeared from the early sanctity of his life, that the *SPIRIT of the LORD* regulated his childish passions, and taught him betimes TRUE WISDOM.

So much has been already said concerning the *Covenant* which *GOD* made with *Abraham*, *Isaac*, *Jacob*, and *David*, that it is easy to understand the allusions which *Zacharias* made to them in the prophecy, which he uttered after his son was circumcised; and we shall soon see how exactly his prediction was verified, and that *John* was the very person whom the *Angel* had declared would come in the spirit and power of *Elijah*, and whom *Malachi* * predicted, would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, &c.

The hymn of *Zacharias* is very properly introduced into the Church Service; for every Christian has cause to rejoice with him, that the *LORD GOD* had visited them, and remembered his *everlasting Covenant*; and through his tender mercies, caused the Sun of righteousness to arise upon those who, with the rest of the Gentile world, were once sitting in darkness and the shadow of death: let us therefore make it our daily prayer, that the light he hath given us may prove the means of guiding our feet into the way of peace; and let us receive, with thankfulness of heart, the knowledge of salvation!

* See Sect. ii.

From the time of this transaction, we read no more in the Gospels, of *Zacharias* and *Elisabeth* ; and as they were greatly advanced in age at the birth of their son, it is likely they did not live many years afterwards,

John gave early tokens of his courage and piety. As he grew up, he forsook the allurements of the world, and passed his time in religious retirement, preparing himself for the great work he was designed for, and waiting the direction of the LORD in respect to his entrance on his office.

SECTION VII.

AN ANGEL APPEARETH TO JOSEPH IN A DREAM—
JOSEPH OBEYETH THE DIVINE COMMAND.

From Matthew, Chap. i.

Now Joseph the husband of Mary being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

But whilst he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife ; for that which shall be born of her is of the Holy Ghost.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS : for he shall save his people from their sins.

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the LORD by the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall bear a son, and shall call his name EMMANUEL, which is, being interpreted, God with us.

Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel

angel of the LORD had bidden him, and took unto him his wife.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It would require a particular explanation of the Jewish law respecting divorces to describe the motives which induced *Joseph* to resolve on putting away his wife privately ; it is therefore sufficient to say, that as he behaved with great prudence, and wished to act with justice and kindness, God graciously interposed to guide and determine his resolutions, and to preserve the reputation of *Mary*, which would have been injured, if her husband had even acted as he proposed to do. This Divine vision, from its agreement with the famous prophecy referred to, perfectly satisfied the mind of *Joseph* *.

The name *JESUS* is the same as *Joshua*. *Joshua* was the Captain of the Israelites, who conducted them into Canaan. *JESUS* is called in Scripture the *Captain of our Salvation*. The name *JESUS* or *Joshua* signifies a Saviour. *Joshua*, under God, saved the people from the idolatrous nations ; *JESUS* was to save the world from sin. Our SAVIOUR is synonymous with EMMA-NUEL ; for GOD WITH US, is, OUR SAVIOUR, and OUR SAVIOUR, is, GOD WITH US.

It is very probable that the *Angel Gabriel* was sent to *Joseph* ; for as God had changed His dispensation, or mode of making His will known to mankind, and was about to manifest Himself in CHRIST, He did not make His PRESENCE visible by the same glorious appearance as formerly, but either sent His Angels with messages, or communicated to chosen persons, by Divine inspira-

* See Section iv.

tion, farther information concerning the promised *MES-
SIAH*, than could be obtained from the writings of
Moses and the *Prophets* alone.

SECTION VIII.

A PREDICTION OF THE PROPHET MICAH.

BUT thou Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little
among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall
He come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel;
whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This prediction evidently relates to the wonderful
child who was foretold by the other prophets, and pre-
cisely points out the place of His birth; it likewise in-
timates an union with the **LORD JEHOVAH**.

Let us now see where **CHRIST** was born.

SECTION IX.

JESUS BORN AT BETHLEHEM, AND HIS BIRTH REVEALED TO THE SHEPHERDS.

AND it came to pass in those days, that there went
out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world
should be taxed.

(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was
governor of Syria.)

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own
city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the
city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David,
which

which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David),

To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife.

And so it was, that while they were there she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes; and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And lo, the angel of the LORD came upon them, and the glory of the LORD shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is CHRIST the LORD.

And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the LORD hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

And all they that heard it, wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

But

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Augustus Cæsar having brought all kingdoms into subjection to the Roman Empire, was regarded as sovereign of the world; and being desirous of knowing the number and wealth of the subjects of his vast dominions, he commanded the governor of every province to take an exact account of the name and estate of each individual, that a tax might be laid in proportion to their circumstances. The provinces which had Roman governors were taxed by the Roman state; but Judea having a king of its own, who governed according to the Jewish law, and had the power of life or death, was called a dependent kingdom: the king alone paid a tribute to the Romans, as a token of subjection to them; but his subjects were taxed by himself. *Augustus*, intending to reduce his country in a short time to the same condition as the rest, commanded that the governor of *Syria* should enrol, or make a register-book, of the names and possessions of all its inhabitants; but as the enrolment of such multitudes of people as the Roman empire contained took up a considerable time, the taxation did not take place in Judea till some years afterwards.

Joseph and *Mary* his wife, though at this time of mean estimation, being both lineally descended from king *David*, were obliged, by the emperor's authority, to be enrolled in that town to which their family belonged:

longed; and thus were brought to *Bethlehem*, where the prophet *Micah* * had so long before predicted CHRIST should be born.

The town of *Bethlehem* was so full of people, who attended to have their names enrolled, that Joseph and Mary were obliged to lodge in a stable; and in this mean place was ushered into the world that glorious and excellent person, whom from the beginning God had appointed to be the heir of all things; but as the kingdom of the MESSIAH was not to be of this world, it was needless for him to appear with the ensigns of an earthly prince: yet THE FATHER would not leave him without witnesses. We see our SAVIOUR, in this wonderful account which the Evangelist has given of him, surrounded with a brighter lustre than a court or a crown could have afforded: angelic legions are employed to proclaim this new-born King, who were sent, not to the great men of Judea, but to humble pious shepherds, diligently employed in the duties of their calling. Who would not have gladly shared in their poverty and fatigue, to have heard with them these tidings of great joy † ?

But not to these poor shepherds was this joy confined; the glad tidings of salvation were designed for *all people*. The SAVIOUR who was born, was the SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD; and all who believe that the infant Jesus was He, must experience the same joy; and surely they can do no less than praise and glorify God, for sending his holy angels to proclaim *peace on earth, and good-will towards sinful men*, and to make known the birth of the REDEEMER.

We may observe an evident agreement between the

* See Sect. viii.

† Doddridge's Family Expositor.

Predictions concerning the new COVENANT, &c. and the Tidings and Hymn of the Angels.

The former part of *Isaiah's* Prediction *, *Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given*, which had hitherto been incomprehensible, was cleared up by the birth of JESUS, who might justly be called *Wonderful*; and we shall see the remainder, concerning the other epithets applied to him, sufficiently explained to convince us, that the prediction certainly related to him.

There are in the New Testament genealogies of CHRIST's descent, as the Son of *Mary*, and the reputed Son of *Joseph*; by which we find that JESUS was lineally descended from *David*; that He was of the tribe of *Judah*; that He proceeded from *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; that He was of the posterity of *Shem*, the son of *Noah*; of the race of *Seth*, the son of *Adam*; that he was born of a *Virgin*, and in *Bethlehem of Judea*. Thus far, the prophecies were fulfilled in His birth, as the *Son of a Woman*: but he was also the *Son of God* †.

SECTION X.

THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD WHO WAS MADE MAN.

From John, Chap. i.

IN the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with GOD, and the WORD was GOD.

The same was in the beginning with GOD.

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

* Sect. iv.

† The first of the Genealogies alluded to is in the first Chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel; the other, in the third of St. Luke's.

And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

But as many received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name.

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the WORD was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of his Father, full of grace and truth.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The prophets in the Old Testament frequently speak of the WORD OF THE LORD; and we have before observed, that He could be no other than the LORD GOD, the great JEHOVAH *very* GOD of *very* GOD, by whom the will of the eternal, infinite, and invisible DEITY was made known to his intelligent creatures; and through whom he receives their homage and adoration.

The Evangelist St. John (of whose Gospel this section is a part) confirms the opinion suggested by the Scriptures of the Old Testament, for he asserts that the WORD was truly and essentially GOD, the CREATOR of all things; that in him was a real principle of eternal life, and that he was the author of *spiritual Light* or *Divine Revelation* to mankind.

It is evident, from the prophetic writings, that the WORD was in the world, even after the glorious manifestation of the DEITY was withdrawn; but for a long series of years, *His light shineth in darkness, and the*

darkness comprehended it not; for mankind in general, through the depravity of their minds, and their neglect of Divine revelation, did not discover the great JEHOVAH, through the cloud of error under which he was veiled from their eyes; but his faithful servants, who followed the light, or took Divine revelation as a guide, still heard their LORD speaking by the mouths of His prophets; and beheld Him in his mighty acts, protecting His people, and accomplishing, by his omnipotence, all the purposes of infinite wisdom and goodness. These were led to hope, that He, at his appointed time, would bless the world with His visible presence; but in what manner he would visit His people they could not tell. At length, as the Evangelist informs us, *The WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us*. The seed of the woman, the son of the virgin, the SON also of GOD, "He whose goings forth had been from old, from everlasting," was born in Bethlehem of Judea*!

From the promise made to Adam and Eve, thus illustrated by the history of the birth of JESUS, we may understand, that the LORD GOD had resolved to sanctify or set apart for Himself one of the human race, that he might through Him restore man's title to happiness, which Adam had forfeited by disobedience; and it will evidently appear, from the history of JESUS CHRIST, that the GODHEAD dwelt in Him, which rendered Him infinitely superior to the most exalted ranks of *created beings*; for, as the *body* of man is dignified and raised above the brute creation, by the union of the *soul*, so (though in a superlative degree) was the soul of JESUS dignified by the union of the WORD.

Thus did the LORD GOD lay aside the glory which

* See Sect. iii.

He used to display to the world, and humble Himself, so as to manifest his presence under the human form, in the person of JESUS; who by his means became the *visible image of the invisible DEITY*.

The manner of this wonderful union is beyond the reach of our understanding to conceive; but the history of our SAVIOUR will prove that HE was really MAN, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting, and at the same time really and truly the WORD, the everlasting SON of the FATHER, full of grace and truth.

SECTION XI.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS. — THE PROPHECIES
OF ANNA AND SIMEON.

From Luke, Chap. ii.

AND when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS; as the angel who appeared to Mary before his birth had said.

And when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the LORD;

And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the LORD, a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost,
c 2 that

that he should not see death before he had seen the LORD'S CHRIST.

And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child JESUS, to do for him after the custom of the law,

Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

LORD, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation:

Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

And Simeon blessed them; and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against:

(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity:

And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years: which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

And she coming in at that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the LORD, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

And when they had performed all things according
to

to the law of the LORD, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As JESUS CHRIST was born of a Jewish mother, and before the Mosaic law was abolished, God ordained that he should be circumcised, as the rest of Abraham's descendants were, that he might fulfil the LAW, and that the Jews should have no pretence for rejecting him.

It was ordained of the LORD by Moses, that every mother should present her *first-born* son at the temple, in acknowledgment of the LORD's mercy to the Israelites in saving their first-born, when those of the Egyptians were destroyed; but the tribe of *Levi* was set apart for divine service in their stead, and parents were allowed to redeem their children by the payment of a small sum, amounting to about twelve shillings and sixpence of our money, and offering such a sacrifice as their circumstances could afford. The *Virgin Mary* being very poor; could not conveniently purchase a lamb for the purpose, but presented two turtle-doves or young pigeons.

Simeon was one of those pious Israelites who believed the prophecies, and earnestly wished for, and expected the redemption of Israel. In reward of his piety, God vouchsafed to make a particular revelation to him, which comforted his mind with an assurance that he should himself behold the MESSIAH; and by divine inspiration enabled him to bear testimony, that JESUS was the CHRIST, and to foretel that he would not only be the *glory of Israel*, but a *light to the Gentiles*. The words, LORD, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, signified that *Simeon* was willing to die, now he

had seen the CHRIST.—His willingness to part with life shews that his hopes of redemption extended beyond the grave. *Simeon* likewise predicted the resistance that would afterwards be made to the propagation of the GOSPEL, and the sorrow which the *Virgin Mary* would endure for the suffering of CHRIST. *Anna* being styled by the Evangelist a *Prophetess*, was, as we may suppose, enabled by divine inspiration to bear testimony that the infant JESUS was the MESSIAH.

The account of these two venerable persons places their characters in the most amiable view. They beheld *Mary* presenting her babe in the temple, and paying that humble offering which the LORD had appointed for the poorest rank of people. There was nothing in the outward appearance of JESUS to distinguish him from common infants, yet they willingly acknowledged him as the MESSIAH, and rejoiced with rapturous delight that they had lived to behold him.

Every person who will make the *Scriptures* his study, may now, even in his youth, without the extraordinary inspiration of God, obtain as perfect assurances as *Simeon* and *Anna* had, that JESUS CHRIST was born to be the SAVIOUR of the world. Let us therefore bless the LORD as they did; and if we hear reproach and indignity cast upon our blessed REDEEMER, let us not be ashamed of him; for we shall find the hopes of immortality and the means of grace, which God, through CHRIST, has graciously afforded us, the greatest comforts we can possibly enjoy: for it is the hope of salvation alone that can enable us to depart in peace, and reconcile us to the thoughts of death.

SECTION XII.

THE WISE MEN'S OFFERING.

From Matthew, Chap. ii.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem.

Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him.

When Herod the king had heard these things, He was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born?

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet; and thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel.

Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared?

And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go, and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

When they had heard the king, they departed, and lo, the star which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the

the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him : and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts ; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

And being warned of God in a dream, that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child, and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word : for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

When he arose, he took the young child and his mother, by night, and departed into Egypt : And was there until the death of Herod.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

What these wise men were, who paid their homage to the infant Jesus, is a matter of dispute with the learned. Some think they were Gentile Philosophers from Arabia, and of the family of Abraham, by his wife Keturah. It is at least evident, that they were actuated by motives of faith and piety to undertake a long journey in consequence of the appearance of an uncommon star or meteor, which by some supernatural means they were taught to expect would conduct them to the presence of a Prince, to whom God required them to pay homage.

THE MESSIAH, as we learn from the Prophecies, was sent into the world to be the SAVIOUR both of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*. It pleased THE EVERLASTING FATHER, herefore, to give notice of his birth to each, that they might be disposed to receive him as a divine teacher.

From

From what we formerly * read of the history of *Herod*, it appears that he was of a very jealous, suspicious temper: this king, therefore, must have been greatly alarmed, when he heard that the Prince, of whose coming there was at that time a general expectation, was actually born; and we cannot wonder that all Jerusalem should be troubled, as there was reason to apprehend this cruel vindictive king would commit great barbarities, in order to secure to himself the possession of his throne.

It is wonderful that *Herod* should not send some of his friends in whom he could confide, to be present at the discovery of the rival Prince, and to bring him word at least where he was found, if they did not dispatch him; but in this THE EVERLASTING FATHER'S protection of his beloved Son was visible.

We find, that the chief Priests and Scribes agreed with one consent, that, according to the prediction of the prophet Micah, the MESSIAH was to be born at *Bethlehem*; and *Herod* himself seems to have believed that such a person was foretold, and yet he impiously resolved to destroy him, though from his own age, and that of the new-born Prince, he had reason to hope he would not obtain the kingdom of Judea in his lifetime.

The gifts which the wise men offered, were such as it was the custom of their country to present to illustrious personages, when they visited them; and they afforded a seasonable supply to *Joseph* and *Mary* in the journey which they were that night commanded to take, in order that they might be out of the way of *Herod's* persecution; a step the more necessary, as the time for the MESSIAH'S public appearance was not yet come.

* Vol. IV. of this Work.

From the behaviour of these Eastern sages, the moral philosophers of the present day may learn *humility*. They were *wise* men, yet they willingly resigned their minds to the belief of *divine revelation*, in a matter which seemed irreconcilable to *human reason*—that an infant, whose earthly parents had neither wealth, interest, or power, was of such high estimation in the sight of God as to deserve their homage; and they gladly undertook a long fatiguing journey, in order to bear testimony of their *faith*, and be made partakers of the blessings God doubtless intimated he would convey through this infant to the human race. It is reasonable to suppose, that the wise men regarded our SAVIOUR as a *divine being*; and that they reported, in their own country, what had been made known to them, “and in these blessed tidings, carried back far greater treasures than they left behind.”

SECTION XXI.

HEROD'S CRUELTY, AND THE RETURN OF JESUS
TO NAZARETH.

From Matthew, Chap. ii.

THEN Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the LORD appeared in a dream to Joseph, in Egypt, saying,

Arise, and take the young child, and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life

And he arose, and took the young child, and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea, in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee.

And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Herod, knowing that his tyranny had made him hateful to the Jews, was apprehensive, that the report of persons being come from a distant country under the guidance of a wonderful star, in search of a *new* King of the Jews, would confirm the expectation which so much prevailed, of the approach of the MESSIAH, and occasion a revolution in his kingdom. To prevent this, he resolved at all events to cut him off; and having, from his conversation with the wise men, learnt what time the star first appeared, concluded he should be quite secure, if he destroyed all the infants under two years of age, as the young Prince could not be so old; he therefore dispatched his soldiers to execute his cruel purpose. But the ETERNAL FATHER preserved His son from falling a victim to the tyrant's cruelty, and regarded Him with His constant favour.

It is not possible to describe, or even to conceive, the terror and consternation which the arrival of these bloody executioners must have occasioned at Bethlehem; and it is quite painful to dwell on such a shocking sub-

ject: we will therefore only observe, that the sufferings these little *innocents* endured were of short duration; and there is no doubt but that they were amply recompensed by GOD, for the martyrdom they suffered on account of his HOLY ONE. Nor did their deaths go unrevenge; for *Herod* was shortly after seized with a strange and terrible distemper, of which he died in great agonies *. By his will he settled his dominions on his three sons. *Archelaus*, the eldest son, he appointed his successor in that part of the kingdom which included Judea, Idumea, and Samaria; to *Philip* he gave Panea and Balnea; to *Herod-Antipas*, Galilee and Paræ; and to his sister *Salome* he left a considerable sum of money.

Archelaus, at the beginning of his reign, caused 300 of his subjects to be put to death, under the pretence of a mutiny. The report of this deterred *Joseph* from settling in his dominions, and he retired into those of *Herod-Antipas*, who was a prince of a milder disposition: and as the birth of JESUS was not so publicly known in Galilee as at Bethlehem and Jerusalem, *Joseph* might think it more adviseable to retreat into such a private village as *Nazareth*, than to fix his abode in any populous city. Here JESUS was brought up under the care of *Joseph* and *Mary*. His progress in knowledge and piety shewed an uncommon understanding, and pointed Him out to the world as a particular favourite of Heaven; but the time was not come, at which He was to declare the will of THE EVERLASTING FATHER.

Archelaus, following the example of *Herod*, rendered himself odious to the Jews: public complaint was made of him to *Augustus*, who deprived him of his kingdom, confiscated his goods, and banished him to Vienna, a

* See *Josephus's Antiquities*.

town in Gallia, and reduced his dominion to the form of a Roman province, which was from this time ruled by a governor sent from Rome, called a Procurator, but was in some cases subject to the president or governor of Syria.

The Jews had now additional reason to believe that the MESSIAH would soon appear; for the Patriarch Jacob, when at the point of death, had predicted, that *the sceptre should not depart from Judah till Shiloh should come*: and this, it seems, was the case; for as long as Judah continued a tribe, it was particularly honoured as such, both on account of *David*, and the expectation that the promised SAVIOUR would proceed from it; but when CHRIST was born, and Judea became a Roman province, there was an end of the distinction.

The prophet *Daniel* also had a remarkable revelation, which pointed out the time of the MESSIAH's appearance; but this we shall have occasion to examine in another place.

SECTION XIV.

JESUS GOETH TO JERUSALEM AT TWELVE YEARS
OF AGE.

From Luke, Chap. ii.

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover.

And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast.

And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind them in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey: and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

And

All young persons should endeavour to do the same; and if they are truly desirous of this wisdom, their SAVIOUR will assuredly grant them the aid of his *Holy Spirit*, and lead them on from virtue to virtue, till they gain the favour of God and man.

Our LORD, though he stood in no need of human instruction, submitted himself to the examination of the Doctors. Young Christians should in like manner submit to the ordinance of confirmation, but not till they understand the principles of that holy religion, whose obligations they engage themselves by this rite to perform.

Our SAVIOUR, though he was acquainted with his relation to the ETERNAL FATHER, lived in dutiful subjection to Mary, the mother of his *human nature*, and Joseph her husband. In doing this, he set an example of the behaviour proper to be observed, not only towards *natural parents*, but to those also who, under the denomination of *fathers and mothers-in-law*, supply a parent's place.

It is supposed that JESUS wrought with Joseph as a carpenter; and that, after the death of his reputed father, he followed the same occupation: but this is mere conjecture, for the Evangelists have omitted many circumstances of our LORD's private life, as his public acts were so numerous, that they were obliged to pass over numbers even of them, to prevent their Gospels from being too voluminous. We may however infer, that, till the time of his ministration, our LORD lived in a state of obscurity, distinguished from other men only by his amiable life and conversation, which were perfectly conformable to the *Will of God*, and gained him the esteem of all by whom he was known.

In the 18th year of our SAVIOUR's life, died Au-
8
gustus

gustus Caesar, after a reign of near forty years. He was succeeded by Tiberius, a son whom his wife Livia had when she was married to a former husband, but a prince of a very different disposition from his predecessor. Tiberius, in the second year of his accession, appointed to the government of justice, Valerius Grattus, who was the fourth governor since the banishment of Archelaus. Grattus having continued eleven years, was recalled, and Pontius Pilate, a man of a fierce, cruel, and covetous temper, was appointed in his stead.

SECTION XV.

THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

From Luke, Chap. iii.

New in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea, and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene.

Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.

As it is written in the Prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe.

He was not that light, but he was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

And

And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey.

And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make his paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of GOD.

Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that GOD is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

Then came also Publicans to be baptized, and said unto

unto him, Master, What shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages.

And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the CHRIST or not :

John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptized you with with water ; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather his wheat into his garner ; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The wonderful circumstances of *John's* birth, and the predictions of the *Angel* and *Zacharias* concerning him, have already been related ; and we also know, that the ancient Prophets foretold, that a messenger should be sent to prepare the world for the reception of the MESSIAH. These predictions were all completely fulfilled in *John* the Baptist, who, at God's appointed time, shewed himself as a *Prophet*, foretelling the approach of the SAVIOUR, and also as a witness that Jesus was the very person.

The Evangelist is very particular in respect to the exact time of *John's* appearance, so that the falsehood might

might have been easily detected, if there had never been such a person ; and a Jewish historian attests, that *John* lived in Judea in the reign of *Herod-Antipas* *.

In his outward appearance, *John* greatly resembled the prophet *Elijah*, and the same piety and zeal animated his heart : there was nothing of excessive rigour, but only of great simplicity in his manner. The place where he preached was not an uninhabited desert, for it had six cities in it ; but it was a part of the country not so well cultivated and peopled as the rest of Judea. The food which he ate was the natural produce of the country. Locusts are a kind of large grasshoppers, and, when sprinkled with salt and fried, are said to taste much like river cray-fish. *Wild* honey is that which is found in trees and the cliffs of rocks.

John was by birth a priest, and as such had authority to preach ; and, besides his exemplary piety, he bore evident marks of prophetic inspiration. All these causes concurred to awaken the attention of the people to his doctrine, and without doubt they were curious to know why he did not, like the other priests, deliver his doctrine in the Synagogues or the Temple ; but this he could not do, because the rulers of the Sanhedrim, or great council, would have prevented him, as he spake in opposition to their opinions. Now Christianity is established, field preaching is unnecessary, because there are places for public worship provided, where Christians may assemble without obstruction or interruption.

The Jewish church, to which *John* was sent to announce the coming of the MESSIAH, was at that time, as has been before observed, in a barren and desert condition ; unfit, without reformation, for the reception of her King. It was in this desert country, desert in respect

* Josephus's Antiquities.

to spiritual things, that John was sent to prepare the way of the LORD, by preaching repentance.

It appears from the history, that the person of JESUS was unknown to *John*, which might very possibly be the case, because they had from their infancy lived in distant places ; but *John* received, by divine revelation, a commission to point CHRIST out to the Jews, as soon as he should be made known to himself; and in the mean while, he was to remove the wrong notions they entertained respecting the *Kingdom of the MESSIAH*. The people, from the prophecy of Daniel, were in full expectation, that the kingdom of the GOD of heaven, under MESSIAH the Prince, would shortly appear; and their subjection to the Roman Power made them impatient for its approach. They were, therefore, extremely attentive to *John*, when he preached, that *the kingdom of heaven was at hand*; but could not reconcile his doctrines with the idea they had formed of this kingdom, which they supposed would be like that of *David* and *Solomon*, and exalt their church and nation to the greatest height of power, splendor and solemnity. *John* preached the baptism of *Repentance*; teaching them, that the works or ceremonial observances of the law, in which they made righteousness to consist, would not procure them salvation; but that they must seek for acceptance from GOD upon other terms*, must repent of all the irregularities of their lives, and be baptized in token of their sincere desire to be washed and cleansed from them; assuring the people, that if they attended to this institution in a truly penitent manner, they might consider it as a pledge or token of their being freely forgiven of GOD; and as a sign to distin-

* Doddridge's Family Expositor.

guish that remnant, which God, by the prophet *Malachi*, had promised to spare *.

The sect of the *Pharisees* was one of the most ancient and most considerable sects among the Jews; its origin is not very well known. It was very numerous, and distinguished from other Israelites by a greater appearance of sanctity and strictness of life. The *Pharisees* substituted human tradition in the room of God's written word, and, in our Lord's and John the Baptist's time, they were proud, covetous, unjust, superstitious, and hypocritical: yet they were held in great estimation by the common people, on account of their eminent learning and pretensions to piety.

The *Sadducees* was another principal sect of the Jews: what chiefly distinguished them was, that they denied the immortality of the soul; and consequently disbelieved the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments. Notwithstanding these erroneous opinions, the *Sadducees* were in the chief employments of the nation, and many of them even priests.

The *Publicans* were a set of men, whose office it was to collect the taxes which the Romans imposed on the Jews, and to pay them to others, who were called the Chiefs of the *Publicans*; and these people, being generally persons of an infamous character for their injustice and oppression, seem to have applied to *John* under a sense of guilt.

The Baptist's address to the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* implied, that so far from being accepted as the children of Abraham, they would be rejected as a race of crafty mischievous creatures, unless they became true penitents, and entirely forsook their sins; and that the very

* See Section ii.

stones, if God thought proper to animate them, might become, in a much nobler sense of the word, children to Abraham, by imitating his *faith and obedience*, which would entitle them to be partakers in the promises made to that Patriarch. That the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* might be truly sensible of their danger, the Baptist warned them, in vehement and forcible language, to expect those judgments which had formerly been denounced by the Prophets.

The *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* were offended with this address, and refused to be baptized; but the common people were alarmed, and requested *John* to inform them how they should escape this dreadful condemnation; on which he told them to be careful, not only to observe the ceremonies of religion, but to practice the duties of charity and justice also.

John, finding that many began to think him the MESSIAH, immediately acquainted them he was not so, and proceeded to describe the office of CHRIST; acknowledging that CHRIST would be greatly superior to himself, as by the baptism of water he could only cleanse the *body*, whereas CHRIST would with the HOLY GHOST purify the *mind*; and finally separate the good from the bad, as the husbandman separates the wheat from the chaff; and take the good to heaven, but doom the wicked to a place of everlasting torment.

The spirit of prophecy, which seems to have been withheld from the time of *Malachi*, now openly revived in *John*; for though his predictions agreed with the ancient prophecies, he mentioned many circumstances, which could only be known by divine revelation to himself, particularly the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins, the approach of the MESSIAH, and the baptism of the HOLY GHOST.

When

When we read the discourses of *John the Baptist*, we should consider them addressed to ourselves, as well as to the Jews; for we equally stand in need of *repentance*. The Sacrament of Baptism will prove ineffectual to our salvation, unless we perform the conditions made in our name, and endeavour to live as becomes those who are made children of God, members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven.

SECTION XVI.

A PASSAGE OF THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH RELATING TO THE MESSIAH.

From, Isaiah, Chap. xi.

AND there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the LORD.

And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.

But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This passage of Isaiah's prophecy certainly relates to the

the MESSIAH, and intimates, that he would be particularly distinguished from all mankind, by the circumstance of *the SPIRIT of the LORD resting upon him* ; or, in other words, by the constant inspiration of the HOLY GHOST.

Under the Mosaic dispensation, we read of the *SPIRIT of the LORD* coming upon particular persons, such as *Moses, Joshua, Samson, &c.* who by this means were endued with supernatural *wisdom, strength, courage, &c.* or they were enabled to foretell future events, impenetrable to human reason ; and, compelled by an impulse, which they could not resist, to declare the *divine Will and Commandments* to others. This is what we call *divine inspiration*, and the men who were thus inspired, denominated *Prophets*. The Prophets were *mere men*, and in common had no guide but *human reason* ; but occasional inspiration improved their understandings, and had undoubtedly an influence on their lives, which they willingly devoted to the service of the LORD, who had thus honoured them : and endeavoured to reform the rest of the world, both by their conversation and example. The MESSIAH was to be eminently distinguished above these : for the *spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of knowledge, and the fear of the LORD*, was to rest on him, or remain constantly with him, that he might be qualified to *judge with righteousness, and reprove with equity* ; which no *mere human being* could do in all instances, *men having* no means of forming any judgment of things, but from the *sight of their eyes and the hearing of their ears*.

Let us now go on with the history, and see whether it was made evident that the *Spirit of the LORD rested upon JESUS CHRIST*.

SECTION XVII.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.—THE HOLY SPIRIT
VISIBLY DESCENDS ON HIM.

From Matthew, Chap. iii.—John, Chap. i.

THEN cometh JESUS from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And JESUS answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

And JESUS, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the SPIRIT of GOD descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.

And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This is he of whom I spake. He that cometh after me, is preferred before me; for he was before me.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We must perceive a wonderful difference betwixt the reception which *John the Baptist* gave to the people who flocked around him from different parts, and to our SAVIOUR.—The former he called upon as *sinners* to repent, and be baptized; our LORD he addressed as one from whom he stood in need of baptism himself, the baptism of the HOLY GHOST, of which he had advertised his followers; nor was *the Baptist* willing to perform his office to a person so infinitely his superior, till he

he understood that by doing so he should be instrumental to the MESSIAH'S *fulfilling all righteousness*.

Our LORD had been circumcised, in order to fulfil in his own divine person the Jewish law; and he submitted to be baptized in order to sanctify the Sacrament of Baptism, which was to be to Christians instead of the Jewish rite of circumcision; but probably there was still a higher reason—when our LORD had been baptized in order to *fulfil all righteousness*, the HOLY GHOST visibly descended upon him, and he was declared by a voice from heaven to be *the beloved SON of GOD, in whom he was well pleased*. These circumstances were perhaps intended to encourage those who should afterwards be baptized with a view to righteousness, to hope that they should be acknowledged as the *adopted children of GOD*, and receive the baptism of the HOLY GHOST; for it was upon the *human nature* of the second Adam, the great representative of all mankind, that the HOLY SPIRIT descended.

JESUS, knowing that it was the will of THE ETERNAL FATHER that he should enter on his ministry, left his private retirement at Nazareth, and came to John to be baptized, that he might authorise the Baptist's proceedings by his public approbation of them, and also receive the testimony of the HOLY SPIRIT, that He was the MESSIAH.

We cannot form an exact conception of the descent of the HOLY SPIRIT, which on *this* occasion assumed a *visible* appearance; but from John's prediction concerning the nature of the MESSIAH'S office *, we may suppose, that it resembled FIRE descending gently on his head, like the hovering of a dove. Thus was JESUS, in

* He shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and with Fire.

order to distinguish him as the **SON OF GOD**, visibly anointed with the *spirit of understanding*, &c. * ; and we shall find that this *Spirit* actually rested upon him.

It appears from the testimony of *John*, that he was not only assured by the **HOLY SPIRIT**, that **JESUS** was the Christ, but was also made acquainted with the divine nature of the **MESSIAH**; for, in respect to his birth and ministry, **JESUS** was after **JOHN**, but the **WORD** was before him, having existed with **THE FATHER** from all eternity.

SECTION XVIII.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS.

From Luke, Chap. iv.—Matthew, Chap. iv.

AND JESUS, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

But he answered and said, It is written, Man, shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God †.

Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

* See Sect. xviii.

† Deut. viii. 3.

JESUS saith unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the LORD thy God.

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them :

And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

Then saith JESUS unto him, Get thee hence, Satan : for it is written, Thou shalt worship the LORD thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In order to understand what is here related of our LORD's being tempted by the Devil, we must still consider him, with reference to his *human nature*, as the *second Adam*.

When our first parents, through the temptation of Satan, disobeyed the Divine command, *human nature* (which at that time was comprised in them) fell under the condemnation of *death*, and they could not themselves restore life to it ; but it pleased God, ever merciful and kind to His creatures, to give comfort to the offending pair, and to their posterity through them, by promising that *the seed of the woman* should, by bruising the serpent's head (or vanquishing the enemy that seduced mankind to sin), repair the mischief which they had done to their species ; and, in order to heighten their comfort, the LORD God immediately gave them a visible security for the performance of this promise, by degrading the serpent, which had been the visible agent in their seduction.

It has already been proved, from the miraculous con-

ception of JESUS, that He was the *promised seed*, and GOD acknowledged Him as HIS BELOVED SON, at his baptism.

The Apostle St. Paul, in his epistles, speaks of CHRIST as a *second Adam**, in whom all who were dead, or under the condemnation of death, through the *first Adam*, should be made alive.

It has been shewn in a former Section, that our LORD had in reality a *human nature*;—when this nature arrived at full maturity, and He was, according to the Jewish law, of age to become a teacher, it was the will of the Father that He should begin His work as the *restorer of righteousness*; the first part of which work was, to resist temptation as the *second Adam*, and to teach mankind, by his example, how to overcome the *Devil*.

The *first Adam*, when tempted to eat the forbidden fruit, was in possession of the human faculties in full perfection, the *natural man* was perfect in him; but he yielded to temptation, and brought death upon himself and all mankind. The *second Adam*, immediately after his baptism, was filled with the HOLY GHOST, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of the knowledge and the fear of JEHÓVAH †; by The Spirit He was instructed, that it was necessary for Him to submit to temptation, and He suffered himself to be led by the Spirit into the wilderness, instead of following the inclinations of *human nature*, which (as we may judge from ourselves) would have led him away from the arduous trial that was prepared for Him.

In the wilderness JESUS continued many days secluded from human society. During this seclusion (as we may conjecture from his subsequent conduct) the

* 1 Cor. xv. Rom. v.

† See Section xvii.

whole of what He was required to *do* and *suffer*, in order to redeem mankind (who were in the sight of God *created anew* in Him) was laid before Him; and the glory of the eternal kingdom (possessed by His Divine nature from all eternity) promised to His *human nature* as a reward for His perfect obedience to the will of God. This stupendous work was too great for merely human being to perform; but as our LORD understood the happy effects His obedience would produce to mankind, and was acquainted with the presence of the Divine nature in Him, He willingly and deliberately undertook it, resolving to follow the dictates of the WORD, and by this means, to subdue in His mind all human inclinations that should be contrary to them; to perform the conditions, and pay down the price of our redemption.

For forty days our LORD was miraculously sustained without food; but when he had received full information concerning what was required of Him, and formed His resolution, miraculous support was withdrawn, and the ETERNAL FATHER, for our sakes, submitted His BELOVED SON to be tempted, that *He might in all things be like unto His brethren of the human race; and be able, after having overcome temptation, to succour them that are tempted* *.

Behold then the *seed of the woman*, the *second Adam*, not in a terrestrial paradise surrounded with delights, but in a dreary wilderness, with no visible means of satisfying the demands of hunger, which began to be very urgent! SATAN, now at liberty to assail Him, immediately made his approach, full of the malignant design of completing the ruin of mankind, by seducing the *second Adam* as he had done the *first*. Under what form

* Heb. ii. 17, 18.

he appeared, we are not told, but may suppose it was the most engaging that he could assume : however, he was known to our LORD as the enemy of mankind.

The Devil began his attack by endeavouring to make our LORD suspect the reality of His union with the GODHEAD, and disbelieve the declaration that had been made at His baptism ; with this view, he insinuated, that if JESUS was actually the SON OF GOD, He would not be reduced to such necessity, and advised Him, in case He was assured of His relation to GOD, to work a miracle for his own immediate relief. But our LORD's faith and trust in the FATHER were built upon the sure words of Divine revelation, and therefore *immoveable*.

Failing in his first experiment, Satan pretended to doubt our LORD's right to the title of the SON OF GOD, and endeavoured to persuade Him, to cast himself from the battlements of the Temple, and thus prove, in the eyes of the world, that He was what he pretended to be : observing, that, if He built His confidence on Scripture, He might from thence derive an assurance that no harm would happen to Him, but that the angels of GOD would bear Him up, and prevent His dashing His sacred feet against a stone *.

Our LORD knew that if He continued obedient, He certainly should be protected, and that no one could destroy Him, or take away His life, till He should willingly lay it down of Himself ; but He also knew that it was tempting GOD to doubt the truth of what had been revealed from heaven ; and it seems He also understood, that He was not to presume on His having been declared the SON OF GOD, so as to put Himself unnecessarily in dangerous or difficult situations : He therefore, instead of following the Devil's advice, re-

* See Psalm xli. 5.

jected it with a proper reproof. Satan next attempted to allure our LORD from His obedience to the Divine will, by the offer of unbounded *power* and *riches*, on condition that He would pay homage to Him instead of God. JESUS knew, that what Satan promised was not his to give, and supposing they had been, the SON OF GOD would have declined them; for he had steadfastly resolved to submit to a life of poverty, to run His appointed course with patience, and to endure the cross, despising the shame; therefore he could not be prevailed on to forego the distant prospect of a heavenly kingdom, for any thing this world could bestow; and, so far from consenting to do homage to Satan, He held him in the utmost detestation. Having, as Man, withstood the temptation of the Devil, our LORD assumed the dignity of the SON OF GOD, and proved, by driving the enemy of mankind with *authority* from His presence, that the *second Adam* was not only the *seed of the woman*, who was to bruise the serpent's head, but also the LORD from heaven *. No sooner were the temptations ended, than Angels came and ministered unto Him as *the heir of all things*, bringing (as we may suppose) food to satisfy His hunger.

Much important information and instruction are contained in this Section. In the first place, it intimates to those designed for the sacred ministry, a necessity for their retiring occasionally from the world to consider the importance of their office, to arm themselves against temptation, and form holy resolutions. It assures all the followers of CHRIST of the existence of the Devil, and shews, that he is a malignant spirit, the enemy of all righteousness, and an infamous liar; that he has set up a kingdom of his own, in opposition to the king-

* 1 Cor. xv.

dom of heaven, and endeavours to draw mankind into his service. The arts he employs to seduce mankind are likewise displayed, namely, tempting them to distrust God's promises in times of distress, to set their affections on things below, to apply texts of Scripture partially, as suits their present interest or inclination, and to presume too much on Divine aid, in cases where it is not promised. And we have the happiness farther to learn, that this malignant spirit has no power over those who stedfastly resolve to worship and serve the LORD only.

The Devil does not assail us openly, as he did our SAVIOUR; but whoever will compare what passes in his own mind, with the history of our LORD's temptations, may discern his operations.

Let us then endeavour to attain a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, which will teach us, that the CREATOR can sustain life by a variety of ways, and send very unexpected relief; and let us learn from them to imitate the example of CHRIST, who has taught us not to despair in times of distress, or attempt to deliver ourselves by unlawful means, but to trust to the providence of God.

Let us also, like our LORD, submit our reason to the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT, that we may, through his merits, become the SONS OF GOD*. And let us devote ourselves to the service of God and man, resolving to do the Divine will as far as our circumscribed abilities will admit, firmly relying on the protection of our LORD, who will assuredly succour all those who endeavour to withstand the Devil.

In commemoration of our SAVIOUR's temptation in the wilderness, the season of Lent is set apart by our

church, for the purpose of humiliation and mortification; but we cannot be expected to observe an actual fast of forty days and forty nights, as our SAVIOUR did; for human nature, without a miracle, would sink under the effort. Neither is it necessary to confine ourselves to any kind of particular food; but when we are engaged in spiritual exercises, such abstinence as is consistent with health, and conducive to piety, is very proper, as a help to our recovery from a state of sin, and our confirmation in a state of virtue *.

SECTION XIX.

THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN CONCERNING JESUS,

From John, Chap. i.

JOHN was sent by GOD for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light.

That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me.

And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

* It has been a matter of great dispute, whether the Devil actually took CHRIST to the Temple and the Mountain, or only represented the scenes to his imagination. This is a point which can never be settled to the satisfaction of all parties; therefore I avoid the discussion of it; but, however it was, the practical instruction arising from the account of our LORD'S temptation is the same.

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem, to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? and he answered, No.

Then they said unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us? what sayest thou of thyself?

He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent, were of the Pharisees.

And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that CHRIST, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

John answered them, saying, I baptize with water; but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoes latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.

This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man, which is preferred before me: for he was before me.

And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

And

And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven, like a dove, and it abode upon him.

And I knew him not : but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

And I saw and bare record, that this is the Son of God.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It has been before observed, that *John* was sent to bear witness that *Jesus* was the MESSIAH : we find, from the beginning of this Section, that he was also to testify, that *Jesus* was the first promulgator of the Divine will, or the author of divine revelation, *that light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*, which the Evangelist before told us was the EVERLASTING WORD *, and that through him should be given to mankind *grace and truth*, or full and free salvation, and a clear revelation of the Divine will. *John* was a faithful witness; for when the Sanhedrim sent a deputation of priests and Levites to enquire on what pretence the *Baptist* collected together such multitudes of people, he readily answered all their questions, boldly asserting that he acted by divine commission, and announced the coming of the MESSIAH.

On the next day, after the visit of the Levites, and probably before they went back to Jerusalem, *Jesus* returned from the temptation, and presented himself again to *John*, who acknowledged him to the world as

* See Sect. xii.

the *Lamb of God*, declaring him to be the person whose superiority he had so lately confessed.

All that the Baptist spake of our LORD was by *Divine inspiration*; and the expression, "*Lamb of God*," alluded to the sacrifice which JESUS was appointed to make for the sins of the world. John assured his hearers, that there was no collusion between our LORD and him; for he asserted, that the person of the MESSIAH was unknown to him, till the HOLY SPIRIT pointed him out; but that he had now no doubt concerning this matter; as, besides the secret intimation which his mind had received, when JESUS came to be baptized, he had been an eye-witness of the descent of the HOLY SPIRIT, which he had been taught by divine revelation to expect would rest upon the MESSIAH; and that, therefore, he verily believed JESUS to be the SON of GOD, *He* who was to baptize with the HOLY GHOST.

This testimony of the Baptist should confirm our belief in CHRIST as the SON of GOD, the Saviour of the world.

SECTION XX.

TWO DISCIPLES OF JOHN, AND NATHANIEL,

ATTEND JESUS.

From John, Chap. i.

AGAIN, the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples: and looking upon JESUS as he walked, he saith: Behold the Lamb of God.

And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed JESUS.

Then JESUS turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him,

Rabbi.

Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where dwellest thou?

He saith unto them, come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day; for it was about the tenth hour.

One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

He first findeth his brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the CHRIST.

And he brought him to JESUS. And when JESUS beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone.

The day following, JESUS would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the Prophets did write, JESUS of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

JESUS saw Nathanael coming unto him, and saith of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.

Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? JESUS answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee: when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.

JESUS answered and saith unto him, Because I said, unto

unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.

And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Baptist took every occasion of bearing testimony to JESUS, and of communicating to others what the HOLY SPIRIT had lately revealed to him, that Christ was the LAMB of GOD. This expression might not be fully understood either by John or his hearers, for it was *prophetical*; and therefore to be explained, as other prophecies were, by its completion. What CHRIST himself afterwards taught, and what he suffered, threw light on John's testimony.

We read in a former Section, that when John the Baptist preached the doctrine of repentance, numbers of persons resorted to him, and were baptized, confessing their sins. One of these was Simon Peter, a man of a very zealous temper, extremely desirous of being instructed in the truth, and therefore a very proper person to attend the MESSIAH, as a witness of his life and conversation; it appears that our LORD's other chosen companions were equally fit for this purpose; his selection of them; therefore, shews that he knew all hearts.

When Andrew and the other disciple followed JESUS, he, knowing their disposition, kindly invited them to accompany him, and soon gave an evident proof that he was possessed of divine knowledge, by the name, which he gave to Simon Peter: *Cephus* signifies a *Rock*, and was prophetic of the firmness with which Peter would maintain the truth of the Gospel:

JESUS,

JESUS, having entered on his public ministry, removed from Bethabara to Galilee. Bethsaida, the place, where Philip, Andrew, and Simon, dwelt, was a town of Galilee, on the sea of Tiberius.

Nathanael, though a native of Galilee, had, in common with other Jews, a very mean opinion of Nazareth, as worse than the rest of the country. Philip advised him not to be led away by popular prejudice, but to see and converse with Jesus himself. The heart of the good Nathanael was well known to our SAVIOUR, and immediately on his approach he gave public testimony to the rectitude of the mind and conduct of this worthy man. By an *Israelite indeed*, we are to understand a plain upright person, just and true in his dealings with mankind, and humble and pious to God.

Nathanael was greatly surprised that Jesus, whom he regarded as an entire stranger, should thus undertake to answer for his character; but still more so to hear, that he was acquainted with the private conversation which passed between him and Philip in their secret retirement: and immediately acknowledged our LORD to be, not only the expected King of Israel, but the Son of God; since even the inward recesses of the human mind were thus open to his view.

Jesus assured Nathanael that, as he was so ready of belief, he would give him still greater proofs of his divine nature, by the performance of miracles; and convince him, that though he appeared on earth as the Son of Man, he could open the kingdom of heaven to all true believers, where they should hereafter behold him attended by the holy Angels.

What pleasure must the good Nathanael have received from this kind discourse of our SAVIOUR! Let us endeavour to imitate the example of this worthy man,

man, by being sincere and pious in all our words and actions; then shall we meet with the approbation of God; conscious rectitude will give peace to our minds; and Heaven will be our reward!

It is to be remarked, that nothing farther was required of these first disciples of our LORD, than a belief that he was the MESSIAH, the SON OF GOD; and a humble and teachable disposition.

SECTION XXI.

OUR LORD'S FIRST MIRACLES.

From John, Chap. ii.

AND the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of JESUS was there.

And both JESUS was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of JESUS said unto him, They have no wine.

JESUS saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

And there were set there six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins a-piece.

JESUS saith unto them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew now whence it was (but the servants which drew the water knew), the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth

doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.

This beginning of miracles did JESUS in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory: and his disciples believed on him.

After this, JESUS went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples, and they continued there not many days.

And the Jews passover was at hand, and JESUS went up to Jerusalem. Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, on the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

But JESUS did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

. It is supposed that Mary was related to the persons whose marriage our blessed LORD honoured with his presence, and that it was on this account he and his disciples were invited. There is reason to think that the bridegroom was not in very affluent circumstances, by the small quantity of wine he provided; and Mary seems by her solicitude to procure a supply, to have been concerned in the management of the feast. The answer which JESUS made, when she intimated a desire that he would work a miracle for this purpose, though intended to reprove her for dictating to him in a matter wherein he was to act by divine power, was neither severe nor undutiful; for it was the custom of those times, for the best-bred people to address ladies of the first distinction in that manner. Our SAVIOUR, by
reproving.

reproving his mother, might also have a view to the idolatrous honours which would afterwards be paid to her by some mistaken Christians. His thus forbidding her to interfere in those matters which related to his *divine* nature, proves that Mary, though a very good woman, was never designed by God as a mediatrix or intercessor for mankind; and the meekness with which she received his reproof, evinces that she was conscious she had been guilty of an impropriety, and had no right to assume authority over JESUS, when he was acting as the *Son of God*: to call her the *Mother of God* and the *Queen of Heaven*, is blasphemy.

Mary did not regard this rebuke as a denial; for it is plain, from the directions she gave to the servants, that she still expected a miracle would be wrought. Our LORD, on this occasion, gave an endearing instance of his social and obliging temper, and taught his followers not to censure others for innocent liberties, at proper seasons of festivity. He likewise reflected great honour on the marriage state, by choosing this occasion for the first public manifestation of his *divine* power of working miracles.

What was the size of those water-jars is uncertain; but it is supposed each held four gallons and a half, amounting in the whole to fifty-four gallons: this, when converted into wine, was a liberal supply; and its flavour was so uncommonly good, that the governor of the feast (supposed to have been either the principal guest, or a priest or Levite) wondered that the bridegroom had not produced it at first, according to the usual custom; that those who observed the rules of temperance, and would not continue drinking till they lost their taste and discernment, might be honoured with the best.

The wine was not given, as we may reasonably suppose, to be all drank at this festival, but as a gift to the new-married couple for future occasions. Had not the guests in general behaved with sobriety, we may be sure this miracle would not have been wrought, because Christ would have brought disgrace upon himself as a Divine Teacher, had he exerted miraculous power in order to minister to riot and intemperance.

In performing this miracle our LORD made use of no outward action. It does not appear that he touched the water; yet it is plain that he knew the very instant in which the alteration took place. Now the changing of the nature of any thing is equal to the act of *creation*, and could not be performed by any power but that of the SUPREME BEING. As MAN, therefore, CHRIST could not have wrought any miracle himself, but would, on such occasions as these, have said, as Moses and the Prophets did, when the LORD revealed to them that HE would alter the course of nature, "*Thus saith the LORD,*" "*The LORD will do so and so;*" but our SAVIOUR, as we find, professed to have the power of God in himself, and acted with authority, as the Image of God upon earth.

The Evangelist points out the design and intent of our Saviour's miracles, namely, to prove that he was the SON OF GOD, and to confirm the faith of his disciples on rational grounds.

Capernaum, to which Jesus went, attended by his mother, his near relations, and his disciples, those who followed him to learn his doctrine, lay near the north part of the sea of Galilee. Here, as we find, they continued but a few days. The reason of their leaving it so soon was, that our LORD, who observed a religious regard to the ceremonial as well as the moral Law of Moses,

Moses; resolved to go up to Jerusalem to worship; for it was commanded, that all the men of the Jewish nation should appear before the Lord three times a year *.

We are told, that JESUS wrought miracles at Jerusalem; but the particulars of them are not transmitted to us; only we understand, that they were received as proofs of his divine mission; some, perhaps, esteeming him as a *Prophet*, others as the *Messiah*: but JESUS knowing their hearts, that some would prove treacherous, others fearful, and that those who looked for a temporal prince, might raise a tumult and disturb the state, resolved not to trust in them. Our SAVIOUR, on this occasion, gave a proof that he was of *quick discernment* †, and possessed of the spirit of *understanding and knowledge*, since without these he could not have thus penetrated into the minds of men.

“As we cannot, like our blessed Lord, discover *what is in man*, let us, in our intercourse with the world, act with prudent caution, studying to observe a happy medium between that universal suspicion which some persons entertain of all mankind, to the exclusion of friendship; and that undistinguishing eagerness and

* It is related by St. John, that our SAVIOUR cleansed the Temple at the *first* Passover he attended, after his entrance on his ministry; but as the circumstances of this passage exactly agree with what is related as happening at the *last* Passover before his death, I thought it best to omit saying any thing on the subject here, and confess myself at a loss to decide whether our Lord cleansed the Temple *twice* or not. This matter has been fully argued by controversial writers; but works of this nature are too apt to unsettle the minds of ordinary readers, and to create doubts instead of satisfying them.

† See Sect. xviii.

openness of temper, which makes us the property of of every hypocritical pretender to kindness and respect *."

SECTION XXII.

THE CONVERSATION OF JESUS WITH NICODEMUS.

From John, Chap. iii.

THERE was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

The same came to JESUS by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from GOD: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except GOD be with him.

JESUS answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of GOD.

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old?

JESUS answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of GOD.

That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

JESUS answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

* Doddridge.

Verily,

Verily, verily, I say unto you, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up:

That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

He that believeth in him is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

For every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

But he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrim, who being alarmed, as many of his brethren were, at the success of our LORD's ministry, and astonished at the miracles he wrought, made him a visit in person, that he might more distinctly be informed of the nature of his doctrine, and of the intent of his coming; but lest he should incur the censure of the Jews, by conversing openly with JESUS, Nicodemus came secretly in the night, to hold a private conference with him; when he addressed our LORD with the greatest reverence and respect, confessing that his miracles proved, beyond dispute, that he acted by divine authority.

That Nicodemus might not think the acknowledging him "*to be sent from God*" was sufficient, our LORD told him, that no man could become a member of the MESSIAH's kingdom without having a *new birth*; that he must be born of WATER and of the Spirit, in order to be cleansed from the defilement of original sin. Here was an evident allusion to the *Sacrament of Baptism*. Nicodemus was surprised to hear that it was necessary for Jews to be baptized. It was customary, indeed, for those Gentiles who were received into the Jewish church, to undergo this ceremony, at which time they renounced their heathen relations, and it was usual to say of them, that "*they were born again*;" but for the descendants of Abraham, whom he already regarded as the *Sons of God*, to be washed with water, as if they were to be initiated into a *new religion*, he could not reconcile with the notions he entertained respecting God's Covenant with that people. Our SAVIOUR told him, that the privileges of a member of the kingdom of heaven were

UNLAW.

not such things as a man can inherit by natural descent, but of a *spiritual* nature; that the new religion he came to teach, consisted in assuming a new and heavenly disposition, in consequence of an inward conviction of mind that it was agreeable to the will of God; that this inward conviction of mind was derived from the operation of the HOLY SPIRIT, which, like the wind, was invisible, except in its effects.

Our LORD did not at that time enter into an explanation of the spiritual things taught by Moses and the Prophets, with which Nicodemus, as a man of learning and an expounder of the Scriptures, ought to have been well acquainted; but assured him, from *his own* knowledge, that what he now asserted was certainly true, however improbable it might seem.

Our LORD then observed, that if the first principles of the Gospel appeared to Nicodemus so hard to be understood, he would find it still more difficult to believe the sublimer truths of it, which none could make known but the Son of GOD. Our LORD did not pretend to say, that, as *man*, he had ever ascended up into heaven to gain the knowledge he now possessed; but declared, that the divine nature, or (as we may understand from a former Section) the WORD, came down from heaven to dwell in human nature. To shew that the whole scheme of Redemption was known to him, and to point out the exceeding love of GOD, our LORD added, that notwithstanding the MESSIAH was so peculiarly sanctified by the WORD, yet his body would be lifted up like the brazen serpent in the wilderness, but for a more extensive purpose; since not only Jews, but *all persons*, of whatever nation, who should believe him to be the *only Son of GOD*, might obtain everlasting life; that God's gracious design in thus sending
the

the **MESSIAH** into the world, was to save mankind, who would otherwise have continued in death through their sins. In order farther to engage the attention of **NICODEMUS** to these sublime truths, our **LORD** added, that those who would not accept these gracious terms of salvation would be justly condemned: for they were such as none, but persons whose minds were preverted by vicious prejudices, could resist; who, conscious that their actions would not bear examination, refused to be instructed; choosing rather to continue in their wickedness than submit to be taught the way to reform their conduct.

The discourse of our **LORD** with **NICODEMUS** was particularly designed to remove the prejudices which he knew the Jews would conceive against his doctrine; but it concerns Christians also, since it teaches, that being baptized with water, and externally devoted to God, is not alone sufficient to entitle any one to the privileges of a member of the kingdom of heaven, without a heavenly disposition, and the sanctification of the **HOLY SPIRIT**. Let us therefore, earnestly pray for God's *grace*, which, by *nature*, we cannot have, and endeavour, with unremitting diligence, to learn our duty; and, when we have learned it, let us practise it with cheerfulness, not doubting but that God, for the sake of our *faith* in his *beloved SON*, and *obedience* to his *Laws*, will make us partakers of *everlasting SALVATION*.

SECTION XXIII.

THE LAST TESTIMONY OF JOHN, AND HIS IMPRISONMENT.

From John, Chap. iii.

AFTER these things came **JESUS** and his disciples into
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the land of Judea, and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

And John also was baptized in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison.

Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews, about purifying.

And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the CHRIST, but I am sent before him.

He that hath the bride, is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

He must increase, but I must decrease.

He that cometh from above, is above all: he that is of the earth, is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven, is above all.

And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal, that God is true.

For he whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life;
and

and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Now Herod the tetrarch had married Herodias, his brother Philip's wife : and John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him, but she could not.

For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man ; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

But Herod himself laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

* Soon after his baptism, JESUS began to call disciples, who, under his immediate commission, baptized the people in Judea unto repentance and belief in the doctrine of CHRIST, as John did before, and even at the very time. This brought on a comparison between the Baptist and our SAVIOUR : for though there was such an agreement in their doctrines, some through ignorance were ready to oppose them to each other. John's disciples having had a dispute with some of the Jews on this subject, complained to their master. This furnished the Baptist with an occasion, before his own ministry expired, of bearing testimony to JESUS in the actual exercise of his prophetical office. The answer which John returned to his disciples, strongly implied the exalted sense he entertained of the person of our LORD.

* In my Annotations on the history of John the Baptist, I have borrowed very freely from a valuable set of Sermons, published in the year 1782, preached before the University of Oxford, by the Rev. Robert Holmes, at Bampton's Lecture.

He reminded them, that he never pretended to be the MESSIAH, but only his *harbinger* ; assured them, that the success of JESUS and himself were both given from above in just proportion to their different offices ; that he rejoiced in the honour and happiness of CHRIST, as a friend who assists at a marriage-feast partakes of the happiness of the bridegroom. John then proceeded to instruct his disciples concerning the *divine* nature of the MESSIAH, and taught them to consider him as the *Son of God*, who, as the WORD, came down from heaven, and spake what he had actually seen and heard, though the greatest part of mankind would not believe him : those who did, bare witness to the truth of God, who, by sending the MESSIAH, had fulfilled his promises. And they likewise expressed their faith in the declaration which God made concerning Jesus at his baptism, that he was his *beloved Son*, and as such infinitely superior to all the teachers who had ever before appeared on the earth ; for the highest of these had, like the Baptist himself, only *occasional* revelation from God ; but the HOLY SPIRIT, which had *at times* inspired them, *remained constantly* with Jesus. John then informed his disciples, that whoever should give up his *faith* and obedience to CHRIST, would be in the way to obtain everlasting life ; but whosoever should reject him, would continue under the wrath of God for their former sins, and be excluded the salvation he had graciously offered to mankind through his *beloved Son*, to whom God had committed the government of all things, and through whom he HIMSELF acted. Soon after John had delivered this remarkable testimony, he was cast into prison, and his ministry expired.

As the Baptist certainly spake by divine inspiration, and what he taught to his own disciples has, by the goodness

ness of God, been transmitted to us, we ought to avail ourselves of his instructions for the establishment of our faith in CHRIST : let us, therefore, pay particular attention to his doctrine, for it relates to the fundamental principles of our HOLY RELIGION.

SECTION XXIV.

JESUS DISCOURSES WITH THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

From John, Chap. iv.

WHEN therefore the LORD knew how the Pharisees had heard that JESUS made and baptized more disciples than John (though JESUS himself baptized not, but his disciples),

He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria.

Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sycher, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

Now Jacob's well was there. JESUS therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well : and it was about the sixth hour.

There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water : JESUS saith unto her, Give me to drink.

For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.

Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria ? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

JESUS answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw

draw with, and the well is deep : from whence then hast thou that living water ?

Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle ?

JESUS answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again :

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

JESUS saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. JESUS said unto her, thou hast well said, I have no husband :

For thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband : in that saidst thou truly.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain ; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

JESUS saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

Ye worship ye know not what : we know what we worship : for salvation is of the Jews.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth : for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.

The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh,

cometh, which is called CHRIST: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

JESUS saith unto her, I that speak unto thee, am he.

And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or why talkest thou with her?

The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the CHRIST?

Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat?

JESUS saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, may rejoice together.

And herein is that saying true: One soweth, and another reapeth.

I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him, for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they

besought him that he would tarry with them : and he abode there two days.

And many more believed, because of his own word :

And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying ; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the CHRIST, the SAVIOUR of the world.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

JESUS knowing that the Pharisees, who had considerable interest in the Jewish Sanhedrim, had heard what numbers followed him, retired from Judea to avoid their rage, as it was not the will of the FATHER that He should submit to it at present.

If our LORD had not gone through Samaria, He must have taken a larger circuit to go into Galilee from Judea. The well by which He seated Himself was called Jacob's, on account of its having been used by that Patriarch and his family whilst they dwelt in those parts. It appears that JESUS was, in respect to His human nature, subject to infirmities like other men ; the long walk which He took in the heat of the day, made Him weary and thirsty. The woman, when she expressed her surprise at His asking her for drink, supposed that he had the same prejudices against the Samaritans as other Jews had. To shew her that He was free from them, our LORD assured her he was not only willing to receive refreshment from her hands, but to bestow an infinitely greater favour upon her : that he would give her, in return for the draught of common water which He asked from her, *living water*, &c. alluding, as it seems, to the prophecies of Isaiah and Zachariah, concerning the fountain which was to be opened for the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for unclean-

ness; and the drawing water out of the wells of Salvation. By this allusion of our blessed LORD we may understand, that the *well of Salvation* was the *doctrine of the Gospel*, which, on account of the continual comfort and delight it affords, and the never-ending happiness it produces, may justly be compared to a fountain of living or perpetually-flowing water, springing up in the *Soul*.

The woman, not understanding his *spiritual* meaning, took our LORD's words in a *literal* sense; but was soon convinced that He was a very extraordinary person, and possessed of supernatural knowledge, she therefore applied to Him for instruction in a point which was the principal matter of division between the Jews and Samaritans. In answer to this question, our LORD informed her, that the Jews were better instructed than the Samaritans in respect to ceremonies, and that Salvation would certainly arise amongst them; but that the time was arrived for concluding the controversy, by introducing a new dispensation of a *spiritual* nature, which would remove all distinctions, and put an end to the *Jewish rites*; when, instead of worshipping as formerly, by *types* and *symbols*, pious persons would be thoroughly instructed to render themselves acceptable to God, by the worship of the heart without them. The woman readily believed what our LORD now told her, and expressed her faith in the promised SAVIOUR; He therefore graciously revealed himself to her, for there was not the same reason for His concealing His Messiahship here as in Judea.

When the disciples returned, and pressed their master to eat, He took occasion to inculcate, "that the only feast to a good mind is to be employed in the service of God and men," and pointed out to them the happy

fruits of his own labours ; for though He had as yet but just sown the seeds of the Gospel in Samaria, the view of so many coming to be taught by Him promised a plentiful harvest ; encouraging them from this circumstance to preach the Gospel, since He should prepare the way for its reception (as those who sow a field with grain prepare for the reapers) ; assuring them, that a faithful discharge of their duty would be rewarded with eternal happiness.

It is supposed that when our LORD held this discourse, it was seed-time ; for we may perceive, it was usual with him to accommodate His Divine doctrine to the understanding of His hearers, and to refer to sensible objects.

The Samaritans, we find, gladly entertained our LORD, and requested that he would remain in their city, being desirous of receiving further benefit from his instructions. Ready at all times to do good, our benevolent SAVIOUR abode with them two days, during which time he gave them such satisfactory proofs of his being the MESSIAH, that they required no farther evidence. Thus did He sow the *good seed* of the GOSPEL among them, which he afterwards commissioned his disciples to cultivate.

As in the natural harvest, seed is preserved by the husbandman for the future cultivation of the earth, so has our LORD, by causing the GOSPEL to be *written* and *preached* to the end of the world, provided for the continual instruction of his people. If we will prepare our minds with humble prayer for its reception, and receive the good seed with faith, the LORD will graciously nourish it in our hearts, which, with his Divine blessing, and our endeavours after righteousness, will be at length productive of the happy fruit of everlasting life.

The

The *fountain of SALVATION*, which our SAVIOUR opened, still continues to flow. From the doctrines of CHRIST, contained in the Sacred Volume, we may derive constant refreshment to our souls under every misfortune and infirmity. Let us, then, learn to prize, as we ought to do, these inestimable benefits, that the love of GOD may not be bestowed upon us in vain!

SECTION XXV.

JESUS RETURNS INTO GALILEE.

From John, Chap. iv.—Matthew, Chap. iv.

Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee:

Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.

And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zebulon and Nephthalim.

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

The land of Zebulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles:

The people which sat in darkness, saw great light: and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

John the Baptist having been thrown into prison by the malice of Herodias, he no longer appeared in the world as the *fore-runner* and *witness* of the MESSIAH,
Our

Our Saviour, before John's imprisonment, performed many wonderful miracles, which confirmed the testimony of John; and he had in private conversation declared himself to be the MESSIAH, the Son of God; but he had not preached publicly to the Jews, because it was appointed that John should *prepare the way*, and Jesus come after him: but as soon as John's preparation was finished, our Lord himself began to preach.

The prediction in this Section was spoken by Isaiah after Pekah* king of Israel, and Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, took the inhabitants of Galilee, and all the the land of Naphthali, and carried them captive to Assyria. It seems to have been intended to comfort the faithful that remained, by giving them hopes, that at a future time that land, which had first fallen a prey to the Assyrian power, should be honoured in a peculiar manner.

By the *great light* which the people of the land of Zebulon and Naphthali were to see, was meant *that light which lighteth every man who cometh into the world*; by the *shadow of death*, is to be understood, *spiritual darkness, or ignorance of the truths of religion*.

In our SAVIOUR's time, the land of Canaan, or Palestine, was divided into three principal provinces. On the south was Judea, which contained the lots of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. In the midst was Samaria, where the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh formerly dwelt; but in our Saviour's time it was inhabited by the sect of the Samaritans. On the north was Galilee, the remotest from Jerusalem. The most fertile part of Galilee was the land of Zebulon and Naphthali.

This province was divided into two parts, the higher

* See Isaiah, Chap. ix.

and the lower. The higher consisted chiefly of the land of Naphthali, wherein stood Capernaum, the principal city of Galilee. It was situated upon the banks of the Jordan, near the lake of Gennesareth or Tiberius; over against which, on the other side of the water, stood Chorazin.

Galilee was held in great contempt by the Jews in general; who called it *Galilee of the Gentiles*; either because part of it was, even in Solomon's reign, inhabited by heathens, and he offered twenty cities in it to Hiram, king of Tyre; or else, on account of its having many strangers amongst its inhabitants in our Saviour's time, and being the farthest from the Temple at Jerusalem. The lower Galilee contained the tribes of Zebulon and Issachar; and near to the sea or lake of Gennesareth were the cities of Nazareth, Bethsaida, and Cana. From Capernaum along by the sea-side lay the great road from Syria into Egypt, which is supposed to be that called *the Way of the Sea*.

At the time of our Saviour's preaching, Judea and Samaria continued to be governed by Pontius Pilate; and Galilee was still under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas.

We have before read, that though Jesus was born at Bethlehem in Judea, as had been foretold, he was brought up at Nazareth. His first public miracle was performed at Cana, and when he left Jordan, he resolved to return into Galilee; but it seems he did not go back to Nazareth*, lest the prejudices of his neighbours, who regarded him as the Son of Joseph, should

* Some authors are of opinion, that what is related, Luke iv, concerning our Lord's going to Nazareth, and being rejected by his countrymen, happened before the cure of the nobleman's son at Capernaum.

obstruct his doctrine, as it would have been hard to persuade them that he came out from GOD, and by fixing his abode in Capernaum our LORD fulfilled the prediction of Isaiah.

SECTION XXVI.

JESUS CURES A NOBLEMAN'S SON AT CAPERNAUM.

From John, Chap. iv.

So JESUS came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum.

When he heard that JESUS was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

Then said JESUS unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

JESUS saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that JESUS had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.

Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend: and they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which JESUS said unto him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house.

This

This is again the second miracle that JESUS did when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The nobleman who applied to CHRIST for the cure of his son was a person belonging to Herod's court, supposed to have been Chuza* his steward, whose wife was afterwards a constant attendant on our SAVIOUR.

The youth's disease was beyond the power of medicine; his father, therefore, resolved to go and intreat CHRIST to save a life so dear to his parents. From his earnest request, that CHRIST would go down with him to Capernaum, we may conclude that this nobleman had not a proper idea of our SAVIOUR's power; but no sooner did our LORD intimate, that his personal attendance was not necessary, than he withdrew his solicitations; and by this act, gave a satisfactory proof that he had a firm belief in our LORD's power: this belief, founded upon the report or sight of former miracles, was the *substance* of that *faith* which CHRIST commended; and rewarded by curing his son.

To have his dear child thus mercifully and miraculously snatched from death, was a most joyful event to the affectionate father; but his journey was attended with still happier effects, for the nobleman and his whole family became converts to Christianity, and from that time had cause to rejoice in the hopes of salvation.

Cana was the place where our LORD performed his *first* miracle; and it is in reference to this circumstance that his cure of the nobleman's son is called the second.

This portion of Sacred History shews in a very strong

* See Luke, viii. 3.

light the efficacy of faith; and this faith may be testified in as acceptable a manner by those who, from reading or hearing of this miracle, receive it as a proof of the divine power of our LORD, as it was by the nobleman, for whose sake it was first wrought.

SECTION XXVII.

PASSAGES OF THE PROPHECIES OF DANIEL, RELATING TO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

From Daniel, Chap. ii, vii, ix.

I. THOU, O king, sawest, and behold, a great image; this great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee, and the form thereof was terrible.

This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass.

His legs of iron, his feet, part of iron, and part of clay.

Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image, became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

This is the dream: and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.

Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts

beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all : thou art this head of gold.

And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron : forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces, and subdueth all things ; and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces, and bruise.

And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters clay, and part of iron : the kingdom shall be divided, but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay ; so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken.

And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men : but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed ; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold ; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter : and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

II. I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the

the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him.

And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom, that which shall not be destroyed.

III. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

From these and other passages of the prophetic writings, the Jews were accustomed to call the expected kingdom of the MESSIAH the *Kingdom of Heaven*; and John the Baptist was understood by them to allude to these prophecies, when he preached, that *the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand*; only they did not comprehend the spiritual meaning of the predictions, but expected a temporal kingdom, instead of the *Church of CHRIST*, which reigns over the souls and spirits of men.

There was, as has been already observed, a particular time fixed for the coming of this kingdom. Before it, according to the first of the above predictions four Gentile kingdoms were to arise. First, the Babylonian, compared to gold. Secondly, that of the Medes and Persians, represented by silver. Thirdly, the Grecian power, compared to brass. Fourthly, the Roman Empire, compared to iron feet stamping and destroying all that

that came in their way. During this last, the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, represented by a *stone cut without hands*, was to arise and break in pieces the mighty Roman Empire, which was composed of all the others, having gradually subdued and incorporated them with itself.

It has been shewn, in the former part of this history, how these monarchies succeeded each other; and that the Roman Empire was at the highest pitch of power when our SAVIOUR was born into the world: therefore the MESSIAH was expected (by all who paid attention to the prophecies) to appear at this period. But to fix the attention of the Jews with more certainty, the *exact* time of his coming was also foretold by Daniel, in the third of the above-cited passages.

Much has been written by way of explanation of this latter prediction; but it is sufficient to observe, at present, that the Jews, according to their law, counted their times and years by *sevens*. Every seventh day was a sabbath, or day of rest from labour: every seventh year was also a year of rest for the land, and for giving freedom to servants; and was called on this account a *sabbatical* year. Seven years might therefore be called a *week of years*, seventy of which amounted to four hundred and ninety. The meaning of the prophecy then is, that when the temple, city, and commonwealth, of the Jews (which in Daniel's time was laid waste by the Babylonish captivity) should be restored and set up again, it should continue four hundred and ninety years, and no more; for before that time was ended, the MESSIAH should come. The remaining part of this prophecy, respecting the *intent* of his coming, we will endeavour to explain as we proceed.

It is to be particularly noticed, that ~~in~~ the second of the

the above predictions, the prophet relates, that he saw in a vision ONE *like the Son of Man*, to whom the ANCIENT of DAYS gave universal dominion. Our SAVIOUR called himself the SON OF MAN; and it is agreeable both to the prophecies and the Gospel doctrine to suppose, that the ANCIENT of DAYS signifies the LORD GOD, or as another Prophet styles the MESSIAH, according to his divine nature, the FATHER of the EVERLASTING AGE. The union of the divine and human natures in the MESSIAH is then plainly intimated in this prediction.

SECTION XXVIII.

JESUS BEGINS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, AND CALLETH PETER, ANDREW, JAMES AND JOHN.

From Matthew, Chap. iv.—Luke, Chap. v.

FROM that time JESUS began to preach, and to say, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of GOD is at hand, repent ye, and believe the Gospel.

And JESUS, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea : for they were fishers.

And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

And it came to pass, that as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of GOD, he stood by the lake of Gennesareth,

And saw two ships standing by the lake ; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

And

And Jesus entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land; and he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

Now when Jesus had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

And Simon answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless, at thy word, I will let down the net.

And when they had done this, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake.

And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O LORD.

For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken.

And so were also James and John the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

And when Jesus, as he went out from hence, saw James and John his brother, in the ship, with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, he called them,

And they immediately left their father, and went after him; and when the ships were brought to land, Peter, Andrew, James and John forsook all, and followed him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Our SAVIOUR, at the opening of his ministry, made use of the same expression as John the Baptist did when he appeared as a public teacher, the *Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!* from the last Section we may understand the import of these Words.

According to the calculations of learned authors, who have carefully considered Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks, our LORD began his publication of the Gospel in the last of these weeks of years. He therefore reminded the Jews, that the *time was fulfilled*, that they might be the more ready to believe his assertion, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

Our LORD then proceeded to acquaint them by what means they might become members of this kingdom, *Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.* Repentance and Faith are both absolutely necessary to produce that heavenly disposition of mind requisite for those who are desirous of obtaining the favour of God, and of enjoying the benefit of the new Covenant. By *Repentance*, we are to understand a sorrow and hatred for sin, and a thorough reformation of mind, with a stedfast purpose of living agreeably to the will of God. By *Faith*, a sincere belief, that the *Gospel* which CHRIST preached was really the Word of GOD: that he was truly the Son of the HIGHEST; and that all he has taught, it is the duty of Christians to practise.

As our SAVIOUR was now entered upon his ministry, he resolved to select some chosen persons for his constant companions, that they might be witnesses of his life and conversation, and instructed to teach his doctrine to others. This choice did not fall upon the rich, the powerful, or the learned, but upon illiterate men; the only qualification

qualification required in them was a humble and pious disposition.

It appears that Simon Peter and Andrew returned to their occupations, after their first conference with our LORD ; but it is supposed Philip remained with him, as it is likely Nathanael did, under the name of Bartholomew. Peter and Andrew immediately obeyed our LORD's invitation to follow him, yielding themselves from that time to his authority as their master.

Simon gave a proof of his faith by his ready obedience to let down the net, which, according to the usual course of things, seemed a very unreasonable command ; for, after having toiled all night to no purpose, there was but little room to expect to catch fish : but Peter and his companions were soon convinced that JESUS had dominion over the sea as well as over the land, and that he could perform whatever was necessary to promote the *glory of God*, and the happiness of mankind.

Peter, struck with a strong conviction of CHRIST's excellency and dignity, and his own imperfections, requested him to depart, thinking himself unworthy to be in his holy presence. Our LORD, pleased with his humility, revived his hopes by an assurance, "that henceforth he should catch men," meaning that he should convert them. Peter, fully persuaded that the same Lord who had given him miraculous assistance in his former occupation, could also qualify him for what he would appoint him to do, resolved to forsake all and follow JESUS, not doubting but that, illiterate and ignorant as he was, he might still, by divine assistance, become instrumental in the conversion of others. Andrew, James, and John, also concurring in Peter's sentiments, attached themselves from that day to the service of our LORD.

An exact imitation of those *sacred persons*, who were thus set apart for the immediate service of the MESSIAH, cannot be required of Christians in general : we ought rather to copy the example of Peter, who, after having heard the Word of God, let down his net again ; for the service which is commonly required of us, is consistent with the pursuit of our worldly occupations ; yet if a particular case arises, in which we must part either with our religion or our employment, we certainly should not hesitate, but cheerfully forsake all and follow CHRIST, with a perfect confidence that God, under such circumstances, will so order the dispensations of his providence, that we shall be sustained here and rewarded hereafter. Our LORD's words, *repent and believe the Gospel!* are of general import.

SECTION XXIX.

PASSAGES OF THE PROPHECIES, FORETELLING THE
COMING OF JEHOVAH TO BRING SALVATION.

From Isaiah, Chap. xxxv, xlii.

I. THE desert and the waste shall be glad ; and the wilderness shall rejoice and flourish : Like the rose shall it beautifully flourish ; and the well-watered plain of Jordan also shall rejoice : the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it ; the beauty of Carmel and of Sharon ; there shall ye behold the glory of JEHOVAH, the majesty of our God.

Strengthen ye the feeble hands, and confirm ye the tottering knees. Say ye to the faint-hearted, Be ye strong ; Fear ye not ; Behold your God ; Vengeance will come ; the retribution of God : He himself will come and deliver you.

Then

Then shall be unclosed the eyes of the blind ; and the ears of the deaf shall be opened.

Then shall the lame bound like the hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing : He himself shall be with them walking in the way.

II. And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book ; and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.

The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord ; and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. And they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.

They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn his doctrine.

III. Thus saith the God, even JEHOVAH, who created the heavens, and stretched them out ; who spread abroad the earth, and the produce thereof ; who giveth bread to the people upon it, and spirit to them that tread thereon.

I, JEHOVAH, have called thee for a righteous purpose ; and I will take hold of thy hand, and I will preserve thee ; and I will give thee for a covenant to the people, for a light to the nations.

To open the eyes of the blind ; to bring the captive out of confinement ; and from the dungeon those that dwell in darkness.

I am JEHOVAH, that is my name ; and my glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to the graven images.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The first of these predictions intimated in figurative
F 2 language

language that God would visit his people in a manifest manner, and perform many wonderful miracles on earth.

The second was to the same purpose, and implied, that the Holy One of Jacob, by whom was meant the MESSIAH, should be peculiarly sanctified ; and the fear of the LORD established through the light which the Holy One should afford to the understanding of those who before wandered in error.

The third is addressed to the HOLY ONE or MESSIAH, and contains a declaration, that the same Almighty Being, who created and who governs the world, had resolved to take him to himself, in order to fulfil the covenant he had entered into with his faithful people. In the latter part of this quotation, the Divine Being asserts, that it was to himself, even to JEHOVAH, that the glory of these wonderful works should be ascribed ; therefore the MESSIAH, by whose hand they were performed, must certainly be regarded as united to JEHOVAH ; and those who should worship the MESSIAH as a *separate* Deity, would be guilty of idolatry as much as those who paid adoration to graven images.

In the course of our LORD's history, we shall endeavour to shew how these predictions were accomplished. The spiritual meaning may be in some degree illustrated by the Annotations to that part of Sect. XXV. which relates to Galilee and Naphthali.

SECTION XXX.

JESUS CASTETH OUT A DEVIL, AND CURETH PETER'S WIFE'S MOTHER.

From Mark, Chap. i.—Matthew, iv.

AND they went into Capernaum, and straightway on the

the sabbath-day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

And they were astonished at his doctrine : for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, saying, Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, thou JESUS of Nazareth ? art thou come to destroy us ? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

And JESUS rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this ? what new doctrine is this ? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lift her up ; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door.

And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases,

and cast out many devils, and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

And Simon, and they that were with him, followed after him.

And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, for therefore came I forth.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people.

And his fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases, and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

* The scribes and doctors only expounded the law, and taught the Jews the traditions of their fathers; but Jesus, coming with the power of God, delivered his doctrines with the authority and dignity of a divine teacher. Our Lord differed from the Jewish doctors, not only in his manner of instructing, but also in his conduct, which

* Bishop Newcome's Observations on our Lord's conduct.

perfectly

perfectly agreed with his instructions, and distinguished him as superior to those who said and did not.

By curing all kinds of diseases as he did, our LORD proved that he was GOD. What is meant by being possessed with devils, is not precisely determined. Many learned authors suppose, that this possession was no more than a high degree of madness, imputed by the superstition of the Jews to the spirits of the deceased (called demons) entering into the bodies of the living. Others imagine, that some of the apostate angels, who were cast out of heaven, had power to enter into men, and afflict them in a dreadful manner; but it is certainly best for those who are not capable of deep speculations and metaphysical disquisitions, to take the Scripture in a literal sense on this subject, and to suppose (as appears from the account of the temptation in the wilderness, and as many expressions of our LORD's seem to imply) that * Satan, from the time of his apostacy, endeavoured to erect on earth a kingdom, in opposition to the kingdom of the LORD GOD intended for the MESSIAH; and that, on our SAVIOUR's appearing on earth, Satan exerted himself, and employed the wicked spirits who fell with him, in opposing the first establishment of Christianity; and they might perhaps be permitted to prevail to a certain degree, in order more effectually to display the superior power and goodness of him whom GOD had sent into the world, and also to render the defeat of the devil more conspicuous. How the devils entered human bodies is impossible for us to know, because it is amongst the number of spiritual things which we have no faculties to comprehend: but if the opinion that they did so

was erroneous, surely our LORD would have convinced his hearers of the falsehood of it, instead of confirming it, as he did by repeated miracles. JESUS, knowing that the disposition of the Jews was such, that those who believed him to be the MESSIAH would want to make him king immediately, and place him on the throne of Israel, and that others would oppose his doctrine, and raise commotions in the state, forbade the demoniacs to say that they knew him. He came into the world as the *Prince of Peace*; he therefore resolved on all occasions to take every precaution that human prudence, directed by *divine wisdom*, could suggest to preserve it.

How astonishing must it have been, to behold one whose outward appearance proved him to be of *human kind*, evidently acting with divine power! None but an *Almighty Being* could effect such wonder, and we must consider our SAVIOUR in these instances as God *manifested in the flesh*. * Here he is above our imitation; for no one could (as Nicodemus justly observed) perform such miracles unless God were with him. "But let us contemplate our LORD's behaviour as Man, and we shall find it possible to improve ourselves to some degree of resemblance to him, if we will endeavour to follow his blessed example. It is true, that we cannot, like him, *cure all manner of diseases amongst the people*; but we may often mitigate, and sometimes, by well-disposed charity, *remove the bodily afflictions of our fellow-creatures*. If we cannot restore reason to the distracted mind, we may, by religious arguments and rational advice, prevail with some to part with their sins, which are as great tormentors as evil spirits; and calm in others those fierce and turbulent passions, which often end in distraction. We may also imitate the prudence

* See Sect. xxix.

of our SAVIOUR, by avoiding all occasions of disturbing the peace of a neighbourhood, and may learn of him humility. His piety should also excite our emulation; for if he who did no sin, arose before the morning-light, and retired into a solitary place to pray, how much more need have we to withdraw occasionally from the world, that we may recollect what is required of us, and intreat our heavenly Father to enable us to do his blessed will?

SECTION XXXI.

JESUS CURETH A MAN OF THE PALSY.

From Luke, Chap. v.—Mark, ii.—Matthew, ix.

AND it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the LORD was present to heal them.

And straightway many were gathered together, inso-much that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

And they came unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

And JESUS seeing their faith, saith unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.

And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves,

selves, This man blasphemeth! Who can forgive sins but God only?

And immediately, when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee: or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is supposed that the Pharisees and doctors of the law, who resorted to our SAVIOUR on this occasion, came with a view of furnishing themselves with matter of accusation against him; as they were greatly alarmed lest his doctrine should prevail, to the subversion of their own. Conscious that he had divine power, by which he was able to counteract their wicked designs, our Lord continued to instruct his numerous followers as usual. The report of his being thus attended attracted general curiosity.

The poor man, who was so disabled by the palsy, was certainly thoroughly persuaded in his own mind of our SAVIOUR's ability to heal him, or he would not in his helpless

helpless condition have risked an experiment which must have put him to great inconvenience; neither would his friends, who carried him, have taken such pains to place him in a situation to engage our Lord's attention, unless they also had been convinced of his merciful disposition, and of his power to perform miracles. We must not, however, suppose, that they conveyed the man to the top of such a high house, roofed with beams and rafters, and then covered entirely with laths and tiles, for this was totally impracticable. The houses in the eastern countries consisted of one story or ground floor, and had flat roofs, with a kind of gallery at the top: in the roof was a door which communicated with the apartments; and there was frequently a ladder or stairs on the outside; by these stairs the paralytic man was doubtless carried up, and let through the door of the roof. His bed being *borne of four*, most probably was something of the carpet or blanket kind.

When the poor afflicted creature had thus far obtained his desire, he seems to have been apprehensive that his sins would occasion him to be rejected: our Lord, to shew that he knew the inward workings of his mind, and at the same time to revive the drooping spirits of one whose humble penitence and faith rendered him an object of divine compassion, assured him that *his sins were forgiven him*. This expression naturally gave offence to the Pharisees, who regarded him as a blasphemer, though they forebore to accuse him as such at that time; intending, it is likely, to produce his own words as evidence against him in the great council: but their malicious designs were opened to his view; and to convince them that he actually had power to distinguish the inward thoughts of men, and pronounce

pardon to the penitent, our LORD immediately healed the man, and then appealed to their own reason to determine, whether it was not as easy to forgive sins, as to enable a paralytic man to walk.

Surely this miracle alone was sufficient to shew, that our SAVIOUR was by *nature* more than human; for he performed it by a power *inherent* in him, and not as a minister or servant of the LORD. Let us then, like the man who was cured, and the multitude that beheld the astonishing transaction, *glorify* GOD, who, by a communication of his HOLY SPIRIT and DIVINE WORD to one born of a woman, gave him discernment to judge with unerring wisdom and perfect equity, and authority to acquit or condemn the innocent or guilty. Had not the SPIRIT of JEHOVAH rested upon JESUS, he would not have been constantly and fully acquainted with the secret motives of the actions of men. Had not the DIVINE WORD made known through him the gracious purposes of the SUPREME BEING, men would have remained in a state of uncertainty, in respect to the *forgiveness of sins*, neither could they have discovered the will of their *heavenly FATHER*, as the knowledge of these things is beyond the reach of human reason unassisted by divine revelation.

SECTION XXXII.

THE CALL OF MATTHEW.—THE DISCOURSE OF
JESUS WITH THE PHARISEES.

From Matthew, Chap. ix.—Luke, v.

AND as JESUS passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, follow me.

And

And he left all, rose up, and followed him. And he made a great feast in his house.

And it came to pass, as JESUS sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came, and sat down with him and his disciples.

And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

But when JESUS heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice : for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Then came to him the disciple of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

And JESUS said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them ? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then they shall fast.

No man putteth a piece of new cloth into an old garment ; for that which is put in it to fill it up, taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

Neither do men put new wine into old bottles : else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish, but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

* It has already been mentioned, that the Publicans

* See Sect. xv.

were

were hateful to the Jews in general, on account of their office; but the Pharisees entertained against them the most inveterate aversion and contempt, and disdained to hold any intercourse with them. Their employment was in its nature disgraceful, and few would undertake it but men greedy of gain, who regarded not the honour of the nation: it is likely, however, that there were some amongst them who were of a different character; that engaged in the business merely for a maintenance, and executed it with integrity. Our SAVIOUR, who knew all hearts, disapproved the motives on which the Pharisees hatred of this set of people was founded, and at the same time pitied the unhappy situation of those Publicans who lay under an odium they did not deserve: he therefore resolved to shew, by his own divine example, that no person should be despised merely for his profession; and the readiness with which Matthew forsook the profits of his employment, to become a follower of CHRIST, was an immediate proof that he, at least, was not an incorrigible sinner.

As a testimony of his gratitude, Matthew prepared a liberal entertainment soon after his call, to which he invited, in hopes that they also might become objects of our SAVIOUR's kindness, a number of publicans, and persons of ordinary character, usually called sinners by the Pharisees; and our LORD, in token of his approbation of Matthew's conduct, and of his own compassion for sinners, took his place amongst them. This, we find, was considered by the Pharisees as a very scandalous action, and they questioned his disciples in a reproachful manner concerning the meaning of it; to which he condescended to reply. It was the peculiar business of the MESSIAH to convert and save sinners; our LORD, therefore, represented himself as the physician

cian of souls. Those who were already righteous, could such have been found, stood in no need either of an instructor or mediator; neither would those, who thought themselves so, accept either instruction or mediation: but that the Pharisees might not suppose righteousness to consist in the ceremonials of religion, and a strict observation of the written traditions of their forefathers, our Lord quoted a part of the prophecy of Hosea, to prove that God prefers a merciful disposition of mind even to the sacrifices which he himself appoints.

The disciples of John also took great offence at our Lord, for not following the example of their master in respect to abstinence, not understanding the different characters of the MESSIAH and his *harbinger*. The severity of the Baptist's appearance, of his manner of life, and address, were wisely intended to remind the Jews of their ancient prophets, particularly of Elijah *. He came to prepare men for the reception of the MESSIAH, to awaken in their minds a strong sense of guilt, to shew the necessity of salvation, and persuade them to mortify their corrupt affections, that they might be proper candidates for the kingdom of heaven. But our SAVIOUR on all occasions displayed a most benign and affectionate disposition, inviting sinners to repentance in the gentlest manner, and encouraging them to rejoice in his presence, by giving them assurances of salvation, on condition of forsaking their sins, and believing his doctrine. If therefore, the guests at a marriage-feast would think it unreasonable to be required to fast and mourn during the festival, surely it must be more so for those who were companions to him, who came to bring life and immortality to light, to appear like mourners.

* Bishop Newcome's Observations.

The ancients kept their wine in skins and leathern bags, which are here called *bottles*. By the comparison of *new cloth* and *new wine*, our SAVIOUR intimated, that it would be improper to enjoin severe austerities to those who were lately converted, lest it should discourage them, and occasion their falling off, and becoming more irreligious than before. Many of John's disciples are supposed to have been trained from their youth in strict discipline among the Pharisees, Essenes, and Nazarites; but our SAVIOUR's chiefly consisted of men who followed the usual occupations of life: these are generally so intent on worldly gain, as to find but little leisure for religious exercises.

In what an amiable light does our LORD appear, thus humbling himself for the conversion of sinners! The very worst offenders may take encouragement from hence to hope for salvation through him, and the best of men may learn to invite others to Christianity by gentleness and kindness. Let us then, instead of driving those who have been wicked to desperation, by shewing hatred and aversion, endeavour to imitate the *great Physician of Souls*; first convincing them that sin is a fatal disease of the mind, and then pointing out the remedy, the balsam of everlasting life contained in the GOSPEL. Not that it is necessary, or even proper, for Christians to associate indiscriminately with confirmed sinners, especially with *infidels* and *scoffers*, because they hereby endanger the corruption of their own principles. Such incorrigible sinners they should carefully avoid, lest, deceived by their plausible arguments, they may be led to entertain doubts concerning the truths of revealed religion; or, influenced by their ridicule, become ashamed of their profession, and deny their SAVIOUR.

SECTION XXXIII.

JESUS CURETH A WOMAN, RESTORES TO LIFE JAIRUS'S DAUGHTER, AND CURES TWO BLIND MEN.

From Matthew, Chap. ix.—Luke, v.

WHILE JESUS spake these things unto them, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,

And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death; I pray thee come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed, and she shall live.

And JESUS went with him, and much people followed him, and thronged him.

And a certain woman who had been afflicted for twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing better, but rather grew worse.

When she had heard of JESUS, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

And straightway she felt in her body that she was healed. And JESUS immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came down and fell before him, and told him all the truth.

And

And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, certain which said, Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the master any further?

As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter and James, and John the brother of James.

And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.

And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.

And they laughed him to scorn: but when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth where the damsel was lying.

And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha, cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, (I say unto thee) arise.

And straightway the damsel arose and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years; and they were astonished with a great astonishment.

And he charged them straightly, that no man should know it: and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us.

And when he was come into the house, the blind men

men came to him : and Jesus saith unto them, believe ye, that I am able to do this ? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it unto you.

And their eyes were opened : and Jesus straightly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. But they when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

As they went out, behold they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake : and the multitude marvelled, saying, it was never so seen in Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jairus, though a ruler of the synagogue, entertained the utmost veneration for our SAVIOUR, and even kneeled to him. His circumstances in life enabled him to procure the most able physicians for his daughter, and without doubt their utmost skill had been exerted for her preservation, but in vain. The disease was too powerful for their art ; the agonies of death came on ; and the unhappy father had reason to conclude, that before he reached our Lord she had expired ; yet so great was his confidence in the Divine power of CHAIST, that he firmly believed he could restore her to life again, and our SAVIOUR immediately left his company to attend him.

The faith of the poor woman who touched our Lord exceeded even that of Jairus, and it found an instant reward.

This

This miracle being so extraordinary, it was expedient for the conversion of others, that it should be made public: our LORD enquired "who touched him?" not for his own information, but that the woman might herself testify her cure.

And in order to establish that faith which had rendered her an object of Divine compassion, and reward her humility, our LORD publicly pronounced the gracious words of comfort, honoured her in the sight of the world as a true disciple, and dismissed her with the tenderness of a father. *Go in peace*, was a usual form of expressing friendship and good-will towards inferiors, and particularly proper on this occasion, as the poor woman's mind was so greatly discomposed and agitated.

The performance of this astonishing miracle was very seasonable to strengthen the faith of Jairus, before he received the message informing him of his daughter's death, which must have produced great emotions in the breast of so tender a parent; but he does not appear to have given way to them; for he still continued to accompany our LORD, who, unwilling to disturb the afflicted family, would not suffer any to follow him into the house, but his three most intimate friends.

The Jews had borrowed a custom from the heathens of having musicians, who made it their business, immediately on the deaths of any one, to soothe the grief of the surviving friends by melancholy notes, which they accompanied with singing. This practice was contrary to the Jewish law, and extremely absurd; our LORD disapproved of it, and commanded them to give place to him; intimating, that he would render her death like a short sleep. Jairus firmly relied on the power of CHRIST, and conducted him to the bed where his darling lay, deprived of sense and motion. What

an affecting sight! Here was an occasion that exercised the tender feelings of humanity (which our Lord possessed in the greatest degree), and required the exertion of almighty power. As a *Man*, JESUS beheld the sorrow of the parents with the most compassionate concern; as GOD, he immediately relieved it, by restoring their child to life; and that they might be convinced she was free from the distemper which had proved fatal, he commanded them to give her food.

None but He who created the heavens, and stretched them out, who giveth breath to the people on the earth, and spirit to them that dwell thereon *, could thus have raised the dead to life.

It is likely that the blind men who followed our LORD had heard the particulars of this wonderful transaction, and were from this circumstance convinced that he was actually the MESSIAH, the Son of David, whom GOD, by his prophet Isaiah, had promised "to give as a covenant to the people†." The blind men believed that CHRIST was *able* to cure them, which was in fact acknowledging his Divinity; and he rewarded their faith by healing them with a touch. Let us then, who read the history of this astonishing event, believe that the cure was effected by the same ALMIGHTY BEING who first divided the light from the darkness, who was constantly present in the MESSIAH‡, *walking in the way* with mankind.

The miracle of curing the dumb demoniac is a further confirmation of the presence of the Deity in CHRIST; for whether we suppose the man to have been afflicted with lunacy, or really possessed with a devil, no *human* power could have restored his health, speech, and un-

* See Section xxix.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

derstanding immediately, as our SAVIOUR's did. Without the Godhead, CURIST could no more have wrought miracles, than any other man could perform *rational* actions without a *soul*. We may remark, that our LORD always knew at once what he should do, and had no need to seek to God on every occasion: for the WORD being constantly with him, informed his mind, directed his judgment, prevented prejudice, implanted truth, and taught him the perfection of all human virtues, which he practised with delight.

We must not only adore God *manifested in the flesh*, but also endeavour to follow our SAVIOUR's example as *Man*. In this Section we have been reading, his benevolence and compassion for the sorrows and afflictions incident to humanity are beautifully displayed. From his willingness to attend Jairus, and give him consolation, we may learn, that to comfort the afflicted is highly pleasing to our heavenly FATHER. By his tender behaviour to the poor woman, we are instructed to treat the humble and diffident with encouraging kindness; and his readiness to cure the blind and dumb, teaches us to use our utmost endeavours to relieve the miserable.

Our LORD's command, that his miracle might not be made public, seems to have been given to prevent inconvenience to Jairus's family, and to shew that he was averse to making an ostentatious display of his *Divine* power.

SECTION XXXIV.

JESUS WALKS IN THE CORN-FIELDS—HEALS THE
MAN WHO HAD A WITHERED HAND.

From Matthew, Chap. xii.—Luke, vi.—Mark, iii.

AND it came to pass that Jesus went through the
corn-

corn-fields, and his disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath-day.

But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungered, and they that were with him,

How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?

Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath-days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple. The SON OF MAN is LORD even of the sabbath-day*.

But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue, and taught; and there was a man whose right-hand was withered.

And the Scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath-day, that they might find an accusation against him.

But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.

And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day?

* See Chap. xii.

And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath-day, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? but they held their peace.

And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out; and his hand was restored whole as the other.

And the Pharisees went forth and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea,

And from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him, because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

For he had healed many, insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

And he straightly charged them, that they should not make him known.

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul is well-pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.

He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the street.

A bruised

A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was early in the morning, before the hour at which the Temple-service began, that our SAVIOUR walked with his disciples through the field. The Pharisees deemed his rubbing the ears of corn a profanation, because it was customary for the Jews to fast till the public offices of the day were performed; but in this particular they carried the observance of the Sabbath-day to a superstitious length: and our SAVIOUR, by justifying the conduct of his disciples, meant to teach them that they did so; and that God, by enjoining the Sabbath-day to be kept holy, never intended to forbid any one from satisfying the necessary calls of hunger; on the contrary, we read, that in the wilderness he sent his people a miraculous supply of manna for this purpose, and prevented the corruption of it on this day alone. They might also judge, from the actions of the priests, that there were cases which admitted of exemption from the command, *Thou shalt do no manner of work*; for they killed the beasts, and performed whatever was requisite for sacrifices on that day as well on any other: and the priests certainly understood, that they might, for charitable uses, dispense to other persons the provisions designed to be appropriated to themselves, as in the case of David, who undoubtedly honoured the ordinances of God as much as any one, and would not have required Abimelech to break a positive precept of the law.

The MESSIAH * (as we lately read) was prophesied of by Daniel, under the title of *the Son of Man*, which our

* Sect. xxvii.

LORD very properly assumed : for the Jews understood the **SAVIOUR** to be meant by it. It seems to signify one eminently distinguished above the rest of the human species, *that SON OF MAN* who was peculiarly separated by the **FATHER**, to be in union with His **ETERNAL WORD**, and to have a dominion of eternal duration. Such a Being certainly was greater than the Temple. If the priests in the service of the latter might deviate from the *law of the Sabbath*, surely the **MESSIAH** might give his disciples leave so to do, while they were engaged in his immediate service. Had the Pharisees reflected on the merciful disposition of the **SUPREME BEING**, and his declarations by the mouths of his Prophets, that he prefers acts of humanity to the mere ceremonies of religion, they would not have been so severe in their censures. As the Sabbath was designed for the *good of man*, that he might rest from his labours, and renew his strength, while his soul was engaged in religious exercises, the Divine Lawgiver never could intend that he should hurt his health in the observance of it.

The Pharisees, thus defeated, resolved to watch for an opportunity of bringing **JESUS** before the Sanhedrim, for a more direct violation of the Law of Moses ; and we find that they attended him on the next Sabbath.

According to the law of traditions, it was unlawful to cure any man on the Sabbath day ; yet the Pharisees made no scruple of saving animals. This was so absurd, that they could not attempt to justify it ; but instead of acknowledging their error, they listened to our **LORD** with silent maliciousness. He knowing their secret designs, and that their hearts were so hardened that neither words nor miracles would make any impression, cast a look of *holy indignation* on them ; and forbearing to waste his discourse to no purpose, proceeded,

ceeded, in defiance of them, publicly to restore to the poor afflicted man the use of his hand, and then withdrew, as he had yet much to perform, before he submitted himself to their malice.

The Herodians are supposed to have been a sect among the Jews, distinguished by their zeal for the family of Herod.

The prediction here quoted by the Evangelist is in the book of Isaiah *. This is a very plain prophecy of the MESSIAH, and cannot be justly applied to any other person or character whatever. The description which the Evangelist gives of our LORD'S conduct, is the best comment on it; we will therefore only observe, that the word *judgment* means the *Law* to be published by the MESSIAH: that is, the institution of the Gospel.

By every action our SAVIOUR testified his humility and meekness, avoiding, as much as possible, all contention with those who opposed the Gospel, and preaching it even to the meanest of the people; not causing himself to be proclaimed with noise or magnificence as a king, but proceeding with gentleness as a Divine teacher: and so far from discouraging by severity those in whose mind a sense of religion was almost extinguished, he revived by his divine doctrine the flame of devotion, as a fresh supply of oil revives an expiring lamp.

In this manner did our LORD invite even persons of the distant nations, who soon began to attend his steps, that they might learn the will of GOD. Our SAVIOUR'S discourse concerning the Sabbath was addressed to the Pharisees, with a view to correct their false constructions of the *divine law*. We must be cautious not to infer from it, that our LORD intended to instruct his followers to disregard this institution; on the con-

* See Chap. xliii.

trary, he observed it himself with great piety, and constantly attended the public-service. Neither has he any where given a licence to Christians to pass the day in the common employments of life. Let us, therefore, before we presume to violate the Sabbath, recollect, that it is the Lord's Day, and not our own; and let us consider, whether we are furnished with such an excuse for profaning it as will be acceptable in his sight.

SECTION XXXV.

JESUS HAVING SPENT THE NIGHT IN PRAYER,
CHOOSES HIS TWELVE APOSTLES, AND AFTER-
WARDS PERFORMS MANY MIRACLES.

From Luke, Chap. vi.—Mark, iii.

AND it came to pass in those days he went up into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

And when it was day, he called to his disciples, and of them he chose twelve, whom he named Apostles:

That they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils.

And Simon he surnamed Peter. And James the Son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The Sons of Thunder):

And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him.

And he came down with them, and stood in the plain; and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coasts of Tyre and Sidon, which came

to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases, and they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed.

And they went into a house, and the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Whether our LORD retired into an oratory (or house of prayer built for the accommodation of pious persons), or only chose a place of secret retreat, that he might avoid interruption, is uncertain; neither is it material to be ascertained: but the piety of his behaviour demands our most serious attention. “When he had no infirmities to heal, no errors to correct, no vices to reprove, he withdrew from the busy scenes of life to pray to the FATHER.”

By thus retiring from the world before all important undertakings, our LORD has left us an example, which those who follow it will certainly find productive of the highest benefit and satisfaction. Such intense and long-continued acts of devotion as are recorded of our SAVIOUR, are not required of us; but as it is the noblest privilege of man, in his earthly state, to be thus admitted to a communion with the ETERNAL FATHER, we should embrace every opportunity that is consistent with our other duties of enjoying it.

We read formerly, that our LORD had selected Peter, James, and John, to be his immediate companions, and that he afterwards called Matthew from the receipt of custom; but as he was willing that the world should have a sufficient number of witnesses to his holy life and conversation, he increased the number to twelve;

these were to be occasionally employed in preaching the Gospel in different parts, and healing all afflicted persons who believed their doctrine.

The Apostles were in general a set of illiterate men, but endued with sufficient understanding to judge of the reality of the miracles which their divine Master wrought, and of giving a plain account of them to others. Men of superior station would most likely have been impatient to seat their master on the throne of Israel; those of liberal education would have attempted to prove his divine mission by learned arguments, and would have run into curious questions concerning his nature and office; but these, accustomed to the hardships of a lowly fortune, and unskilled in the wisdom of the world, contented themselves with obeying his precepts, and following his directions with exact punctuality, and were therefore the fittest for his purpose.

SECTION XXXVI.

OUR SAVIOUR'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

From Matthew, Chap. v.

AND seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.

And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,
Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel; but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

JESUS, seeing a great number of people collected together, went up into a mountain, not only because he could be more conveniently heard, but also, it is likely, on account of the *old* Law having been delivered on

mount Sinai; and sitting down, as was the custom of the Jewish Rabbies when they preached, he began in a solemn manner that excellent discourse which is called his Sermon on the Mount.

From the solemn preparation he made, the multitude probably imagined that he was going to declare himself the promised King of the Jews, and to demand the allegiance of his subjects. Our LORD, to shew that the *Kingdom of Heaven* was very different from the kingdom of this world, began with pronouncing blessings on such persons as are of dispositions directly opposite to those who seek for earthly grandeur.

“ Our SAVIOUR, like Moses, pronounced blessings on the good, and woes or curses on the wicked. In this discourse he explains morality, condemns several Jewish opinions, commands some things which the law of Moses did not require, and forbids some things which Moses permitted. He shewed what was the chief good of men, namely, *eternal happiness* in the life to come, and peace of mind, and the advantages flowing from it in the present life. Though our LORD annexed eternal happiness to particular duties, we must understand that he supposes such persons will not be deficient in the rest, but sincerely endeavour to fulfil all righteousness.”

The *Poor in Spirit* are all persons who, convinced of the infinite greatness of God, and the imperfections of human nature, have a humble opinion of themselves, and are more desirous of knowing their duty, than of obtaining wealth, dignity and power; who can patiently submit to the lowest condition of life, or fill the highest without pride or arrogance. These are most ready to embrace the Gospel, and will be entitled to its most important blessings, both in this world and the next.

By

By those that mourn, we are not to understand persons of a melancholy, fretful disposition of mind, who are professed enemies to innocent cheerfulness, but such as have a penitent sense of their sins, and regard whatever misfortunes befall them as chastisements from God, and on this account submit with patience, and expect comfort from his mercy, instead of flying to gay scenes of dissipation, with the design of stifling the accusations of conscience, and banishing that sorrow which is necessary to amend the heart. "These will certainly be comforted with the discoveries of God's forgiving love, and be cheered with the reviving rays of his heavenly glory."

The *Meek* are those of a pliant and teachable disposition, who are gentle under injuries and provocations, and ready to submit to any calamities that God may choose to inflict upon them; cautious of giving offence, and patient in bearing it. Such persons will readily conform to the laws of their country, and pay a willing obedience to the governors that are set over them; will be dutiful to their parents, respectful to the aged, and to all superiors; condescending to persons in inferior stations, and merciful to enemies; in short, will study to live peaceable with all men.

Would all mankind govern themselves by such rules as these, each individual would enjoy constant satisfaction; and even, according to the common course of things, the *meek* will escape a multitude of evils, and enjoy as much tranquillity as the world can afford. Their minds will possess an inward calm unknown to turbulent dispositions; they will *inherit the earth*; will dwell among mankind in security and reputation, find friends and protectors, and enjoy their possessions, and

the fruits of their honest industry. * Our LORD is supposed to allude to an expression in the Psalms, viz. *the meek, shall inherit the earth*; and also to speak prophetically of the advantages the meek would enjoy, by withdrawing from Jerusalem before the siege, as we shall have occasion to observe.

To *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, is to have an ardent desire after spiritual blessings, since they alone can satisfy and nourish the *soul* unto everlasting life. Those who thus hunger will undoubtedly obtain what they seek; for God hath repeatedly promised, that *he who followeth after righteousness shall obtain both life and honour*.

The *merciful* are those who feel compassion for the miseries of others, and use their utmost endeavours to relieve them. By such a conduct men render themselves pleasing to God, and are entitled to divine compassion, as well as to forbearance and kindness from their fellow creatures.

The *pure in heart* are such as avoid all sensual pleasure, because it draws the mind from religion and virtue. These are particularly disposed to receive the doctrines of Christianity, most capable of understanding what the Scriptures teach of the nature of God, to discern him in his works, to acknowledge him in the MESSIAH, and will be rewarded hereafter by beholding him in heaven.

The *peace-makers* are those who not only avoid quarrels and disputes, but strive to reconcile them where they prevail. These, for their endeavours to imitate the benevolence of God, will be acknowledged as his children.

* See an excellent Sermon on this subject by Dr. Jortin, Vol. II. also on Matt. v. 5. Vol. III.

That part of our LORD's Sermon, which we have been attempting to explain, is of *general* use; for *all* Christians should be *poor in spirit, sorrowful for sin, meek desirous of righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peace-makers*. What follows was chiefly designed for his immediate disciples. Our LORD knew that some of those who were now attending his discourse, would have the most barbarous torments inflicted on them, on account of the Gospel. If they had not been warned beforehand to expect such treatment, they might have fallen into despair, and imagined themselves excluded from the kingdom of heaven, which they had hitherto supposed would consist of pomps, pleasures, victories, and triumphs. By the blessing which he pronounced on those who should suffer for their faith, our LORD encouraged them to look for the kingdom of heaven in a future state, where their cruel persecutors could not follow them, and recalled to their remembrance the Prophets who had been persecuted in like manner.

It has been before observed, that it was our LORD's custom to familiarize his doctrine, by comparing spiritual things to present objects. It is supposed, from his calling his disciples the *Salt of the Earth*, that he might then behold husbandmen manuring the land with that article, as the custom was. By this comparison, he instructed them to season the minds of others with such heavenly precepts as would preserve their principles from corruption; and warned them to expect disgrace and contempt, if they neglected to execute this part of the apostolic character.

The words, *Ye are the Salt of the Earth*, may be applied in a more extensive sense to good Christians in general, who may be said to purify a corrupt world.

It is also imagined, that the mountain where CHRIST preached commanded a view of the city of Bethusia, which was situated on an eminence, and was perhaps rendered more conspicuous by the brightness of the sun. Our LORD perhaps directed their eyes to it when he said, *A city which is set on a hill cannot be hid*; that his disciples might, from this comparison, consider themselves as exposed to the eyes of the world, and be particularly circumspect in their conduct. From the brightness of the sun, he might take occasion to call them *the light of the world*; thus intimating, that they were not to confine their knowledge to their own breasts, but impart it to all within their influence. It was not possible, indeed, for each *individual* to diffuse the light of the Gospel *universally*; but they might, like *candles* or *lamps*, illuminate particular places, and by thus *letting their light shine before men*, excite them to praise and glorify God, who had given such a religion to the world. As far as circumstances will admit, all-Christians are required to shew forth the glory of God, by their exemplary lives and conversation.

SECTION XXXVII.

CONTINUATION OF OUR SAVIOUR'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

From Matthew, Chap. v.

THINK not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever

ever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment.

But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.

Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery.

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it

it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Again, ye have heard, that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.

But I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne;

Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black:

But let your communication be, Yea, yea: Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him: the other also.

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile; go with him twain.

Give to him that asketh thee; and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them
that

that curse you, do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you :

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven : for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye ? do not even the Publicans the same ?

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do you more than others ? do not even the Publicans so ?

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

[ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As our LORD was professedly propagating a new religion, his hearers might have supposed, that he meant entirely to overturn that which had been taught by Moses and the Prophets; he, knowing their thoughts, obviated this suspicion, by declaring that he came expressly to fulfil it. The *ceremonial* part of the LAW consisted of *types* and *representations* of what the MESSIAH was to do and suffer, and would of course cease, when they were realized ; and the *moral* part, or rules of duty to GOD and Man, our SAVIOUR came with Divine authority to explain, enforce, and improve. Since the moral LAW was of Divine original, he required it to be preserved entire, even to the end of the world ; and threatened those who wilfully rejected, or taught others to reject the least part of it, with being *excluded from the kingdom of heaven* (for this is the meaning of being called "least in the kingdom of heaven.") Many corruptions had been introduced by the Scribes and Pharisees, which our SAVIOUR condemned ; he then proceeded to explain some of the moral precepts of the LAW,

LAW, by which he showed the limited sense their teachers confined them to, and proved that they might be greatly extended.

The construction hitherto given to the sixth commandment by the Jewish teachers, was only to prevent the crime of *actual murder*; but our LORD had authority to improve this precept, by enjoining an entire suppression of hatred, malice, and contempt, towards their brethren or fellow-creatures; since these might end in death, or would at least wound the mind, and perhaps destroy reputation, which to the unhappy object of them might be even dearer than life: therefore, such offences were of the same nature as murder.

Our LORD declared, that as there are different degrees of guilt, there will be proportionable punishments: and commanded all his followers to be as cautious of prejudicing the *reputation* and *sensibility* of others, as of taking away their lives. The Law given by Moses. "Thou shalt not kill," was certainly a good and a necessary law; but with our SAVIOUR's improvement, its value was increased to society.

The word *Raca* signifies *empty worthless fellow*; the word *fool*, in Scripture language, signifies a *wicked person*.

To be *in danger of the judgment*, according to the constitution of the Jewish state, was to be subject to the sentence of the lesser Sanhedrim.

By *the Council* was meant the great Sanhedrim. By *hell-fire* they understood the fire of the valley of Hinnom, or Tophet. This was a dreadful place, which had formerly been the scene of such detestable sacrifices, in which children were burnt alive to Moloch. It was afterwards defiled by Josiah king of Judah, and made a receptacle for the filth of the city; and it is probable that criminals, who were condemned to be burnt, might suffer their punishment on this spot.

Our LORD, according to his usual custom of comparing spiritual things with subjects familiar to his hearers, represented the displeasure of GOD for unjust anger by the *judgment*; the Divine resentment due to those who treated their fellow-creatures with opprobrious anger, to the *Council*; and the future punishment of such as with barbarous inhumanity destroy the reputation of others, to Hinnom: dying without being reconciled to the injured party, he compared to being cast into prison: and assured the guilty, that if they did not repent of their fault, and repair the mischief they had done whilst they continued in this world, their *imprisonment* in the place of torment, to which they would be consigned, should be everlasting; for no one can pay the debt of sin.

After our SAVIOUR had exemplified in what manner the sixth commandment should be observed, he proceeded to shew that the practice of the seventh also might be widely extended.

The third commandment had been greatly corrupted by the Scribes and Pharisees, who allowed the use of oaths on trifling occasions: but our SAVIOUR taught his disciples, that by *taking the name of the LORD in vain*, much more was implied than absolute *perjury*; for he who swears by any *creature*, does in fact appeal to GOD, since He alone sees what passes in the heart; and all creatures are the work of his hand, and depend on him for their very existence. It is therefore very sinful and foolish to use oaths in *common conversation*, since, if persons conduct themselves so as to obtain the reputation of honour and integrity, a simple *negative* and *affirmative* will be sufficient to gain them credit; while the practice of *common swearing* lessens the solemnity of an *oath*, and by abating the reverence due to the *name of GOD*, may lead men to commit *perjury*, and will cer-
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tainly invalidate in a great measure their most solemn protestations.

Amongst the statutes in the Book of Deuteronomy, was that to which our LORD referred, *An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*. This was originally intended to direct judges in respect to inflicting punishments and penalties for violence and barbarity; but, according to the interpretation of the Scribes and Pharisees, it was understood as encouraging a rigorous, severe revenge of every injury a man might receive. To restrain his disciples from such quick resentment, our SAVIOUR added a command, that they should patiently submit to trifling affronts when the danger was not great, rather than indulge a litigious disposition.

The phrase *Turn to him the other also*, was proverbial, to express a meek submission to injuries and affronts, and not to be taken literally, as our LORD's example will shew.

What our LORD said in respect to *being compelled to go a mile*, alluded to a custom which prevailed, of pressing or obliging persons to go on public services. Among the Jews the disciples of their *wise men* were exempted from these services; but our SAVIOUR advises his disciples not to insist on the exemption.

Having directed his followers how to bear injuries, our LORD proceeded to exhort them to confer benefits.

When the Jews were separated to be the peculiar people of GOD, they received a command to destroy the idolatrous nations, and were strictly forbidden to shew them either pity or kindness. They had also a positive injunction to love their neighbour; but from several passages in the *Old Testament* it appears, that these precepts were not designed to make them uncharitable to the world in general, or inveterate to those who personally

sonally injured them, but only to keep up a holy indignation against such as openly affronted the majesty of GOD; for they were expressly enjoined not to hate their brother in their heart, not to avenge or bear any grudge, but to love their neighbour as themselves. If they met their enemy's beast going astray, they were to bring him back, &c. Notwithstanding these, and other precepts to the same effect, the Jews were taught by their *traditions* to love their neighbours, and hate their enemies without exception. Our LORD explained the *Law of Moses* according to its original intention, and improved it by instructing them to imitate the benevolence of the Supreme Being, by extending their charity and good-will to all mankind, enemies as well as friends.

Under the Mosaic dispensation, the Jews were taught to consider GOD as their heavenly King, jealous to maintain his honour, and destroy those who set up idols in competition with him; but our SAVIOUR usually represented GOD to his followers, under the endearing character of "their HEAVENLY FATHER." Such he is to all Christians, for CHRIST'S sake; those who are children of the same HEAVENLY FATHER ought surely to love as brethren. *To be perfect even as God is perfect*, signifies to imitate the perfections of God as much as possible.

Note, Though I have for obvious reasons slightly passed over in my *Annotations* that part of our LORD'S discourse which relates to *adultery* and *divorces*, I cannot be totally silent on a subject which requires such particular attention in an age like this, when the frequency of divorces disgraces the nation.

It is certainly an indispensable duty in all who have the care of youth of either sex, to make them fully acquainted with the solemnity of the marriage-vow, and the sinfulness and unhappy effects of a violation of it.

SECTION

SECTION XXXVIII.

CONTINUATION OF OUR SAVIOUR'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

From Matthew, Chap. vi.

TAKE heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them : otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth : that thine alms may be in secret : and thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are : for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do : for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not ye therefore like unto them : for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

After this manner therefore pray ye : Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In respect to sounding a trumpet, &c. our SAVIOUR alluded to many customs of the Pharisees. The general instruction contained in this part of his exhortation is so evident, that it needs but little comment; for we may readily perceive, it was intended to caution his followers against ostentation and vain-glory in their religious exercises.

Some learned authors are of opinion, that the word *righteousness*, in the beginning of this Section, should be substituted for *alms*: and that instead of translating, they *have* their reward, it should have been, they *hinder* their reward. Others adhere to the present translation, and explain it to mean, that hypocrites are to expect no farther reward than that they seek, the applauses of men.

It was customary for the heathen to use, in their invocations of false deities, repetitions, as in the instance of Baal's worshippers, who contested with Elijah: these called upon the idol from morning till night, O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us! and the Jews were running into the same fault. To preserve his disciples from
this,

this, and to afford them a perfect pattern of devotion, our SAVIOUR taught them that excellent prayer which is called the LORD'S PRAYER, which is at once so concise and comprehensive, as to include all that Christians need to pray for.

¶ Under the word PRAYER* is comprehended all devotion or worship addressed to God, consisting of praise for his glorious perfections, and thanksgivings for the numberless benefits he confers on us; acknowledgment of entire dependence on his goodness; professions of our faith in him, and resolution of serving him; confession of sins; supplication for mercy; petition for all things needful; intercession for the happiness of others. The LORD'S PRAYER, though very short, is admirably calculated to answer all these purposes.

The words OUR FATHER imply, that we should consider all men, especially all good Christians, as God's children and our brethren; and on this account bear them good will and charitable affection.

The appellation of FATHER ought to remind us of our relation to God as our creator, preserver, and constant benefactor; who provides for all our necessities, with tenderness exceeding that of the kindest parent, and who is consequently entitled to every return of duty, love, and gratitude. It likewise encourages us to hope for His favour; and intimates, that we should strive to obtain it, by living as becomes the children of God.

God is every where present, but doth not display his *glory* equally in all places. The Scriptures frequently mention a peculiar residence, where He is more immediately attended by the angels, which place is called *Heaven*. By praying to God *as in heaven*, our hearts are raised above earthly objects to desire heavenly joys.

* See Dr. Barrow on the Lord's Prayer, from whence I have extracted the principal part of the comments on the Lord's Prayer.

Our

Our thoughts being properly elevated, we proceed to pray, that *GOD's name may be hallowed or sanctified*. By *GOD's name*, we are to understand all that immediately relates to him. To *hallow* or sanctify His name, is to acknowledge that He is worthy of all possible adoration. The glory of God ought to be the first object of our devotions; we should render the honour due unto His name, before we presume to ask any thing for ourselves. By praying, that *GOD's NAME may be hallowed*, we not only perform our own duty, but express our desire, that all minds may entertain proper sentiments of the SUPREME BEING, all tongues celebrate his praises, and all creatures worship and obey him with truth and sincerity, zeal and fervency: but we in a more especial manner pray for ourselves, that we, by religious conversation, may bring honour to His holy name. By the Kingdom of Heaven we are to understand the Gospel dispensation, which the immediate disciples of CHRIST had particular reason to pray *might come*, and be settled upon earth: and though Christianity is now so firmly established that no human power can overturn it, yet it is not so universally received, but that we may continue to pray, that it *may come* to those who live in ignorance of it: neither has it such entire influence on the lives of those who call themselves Christians, but that there is room to pray *it may come* to many who slight and reject it. This petition is calculated to express what ought to be the wish of every one who professes to believe in CHRIST, that His holy religion may prosper and flourish in the world to the utmost extent, and that it may particularly rule in our own hearts, to the exclusion of all wicked desires.

By praying that *GOD's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven*, we profess our approbation of all GOD's counsels, and our cheerful submission and consent to his

good pleasure; renouncing our own designs, as far as they are inconsistent with the determination of God's wisdom. We also pray, that all the gracious designs of God may be accomplished on earth without opposition, and that every where an humble, hearty, and full obedience may be rendered to his commands. We likewise pray, that God will grant us grace to perform what he requires, to bear whatever he lays upon us, acknowledging his wisdom and goodness in all his dispensations.

By *daily bread* is meant, whatever is necessary to sustain our lives from day to day. After having paid the proper tribute of praise to our *heavenly FATHER*, our *LORD* directs us to request good things for ourselves, by doing which we imply the sense we have of our entire dependence upon God's care and bounty, disclaiming all confidence in our own abilities, worldly possessions, and earthly friends, since these are ours no longer than it shall please God to continue them. We are taught to ask for them *from day to day*, to keep a constant remembrance of our reliance on Divine Providence, and to restrain all covetous desires of amassing such stores of wealth, as shall endanger our thinking ourselves secure from future want without the care of God.

By asking only for *BREAD*, we are instructed to restrain our appetites within proper bounds, and to be contented with the coarsest diet, and meanest apparel, if our condition in life requires it, and if we cannot, in an honest way obtain any better. We have no right to *claim* from God's goodness, any more than is necessary to support life; but we may thankfully enjoy more, if it is His pleasure to give it us.

The best of men daily commit many sins, and omit many duties; it is therefore necessary to seek for reconciliation and forgiveness. For this purpose, our

LORD

LORD teaches us humbly to confess the sense we have of our guilt, and our need of **GOD's** mercy, and to express our readiness to forgive those offences which others have committed against us.

By *temptation*, is here meant dangerous occasion to sin, which may arise from our own corrupt inclinations, the delusions of the devil, or the allurements of the world; and by praying *that GOD will not lead us into temptation*, we implore his grace to guide and direct our minds at all times, that we may be delivered from those evils, which, if left to ourselves, we should fall into. We may likewise pray to be delivered, when it shall please **GOD**, from those afflictions which his wisdom sees fit to send, either for our chastisement, or the trial of our faith and other virtues; though these are not properly *evils*, being intended for our eternal welfare.

The **LORD'S PRAYER** concludes with a **DOXOLOGY**, or form of giving glory to **GOD**; in which we acknowledge, that He has supreme authority over all things; that the kingdom of the **MESSIAH** proceeds from Him; and that the power and glory of it must continue to be ascribed to Him for ever and ever.

The word **AMEN** signifies *so be it*; by which we express our earnest desire, that **GOD** may be glorified, and our own petitions accepted.

After our **LORD** had concluded this prayer, He strongly recommended to his disciples universal charity and good-will towards others. Let us remember, then, that it will be to no purpose to repeat this, or any other form of words, unless we banish from our minds hatred and revenge, and every unchristian sentiment.

SECTION XXXIX.

CONTINUATION OF OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE
MOUNT.

From Matthew, Chap. vi.

MOREOVER, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.

But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face: that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness, if therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else, he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on; Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Behold

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than they?

Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature?

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.

And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?

(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have no need of all these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was customary for the Jews, not only to observe days of public national humiliation, but to keep private ~~fasts~~. These our Lord approved of as excellent means to promote piety; but he cautioned them against ostentation in this duty, as well as in that of prayer; advising them not to make any alteration in their outward

appearance at such time, since it was sufficient if they humbled their souls before God. What Isaiah spake to the Jews by Divine inspiration, will be the best comment on this part of our Lord's discourse; and it may be applied both to private and national fasts.

Is such then the fast which I choose ? that a man should afflict his soul for a day ? Is it that he should bow down his head like a bulrush ; and spread sackcloth and ashes for his couch ? Shall this be called a fast, and a day acceptable to JEHOVAH ?

Is not this then the fast which I choose ? To dissolve the bands of wickedness ; to loosen the oppressive burdens ; to deliver those that are crushed by violence ; and that ye shall break asunder every yoke ?

Is it not to distribute thy bread to the hungry ; and to bring the wandering poor into thy house ? When thou seest the naked, that thou clothe him ; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ?

Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy wounds shall speedily be healed over : and thy righteousness shall go up before thee : and the glory of JEHOVAH shall bring up thy rear.

Then shalt thou call, and JEHOVAH shall answer ; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Lo, I am here ! If thou remove from the midst of thee the yoke ; the pointing of the finger and the injurious speech.

If thou bring forth thy bread to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul ; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day.

And JEHOVAH shall lead thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in the severest drought ; and he shall renew thy strength ; and thou shalt be like a well-watered garden, and like a flowing spring.

Having

Having instructed his disciples how to *pray* and *fast* in a manner acceptable to God, our LORD proceeds to exhort them against covetousness, for which the Pharisees were notorious ; and to teach them to place their confidence in Divine Providence, instead of worldly treasures.

Every article in which riches consists is liable to destruction and loss : the finest garments are subject to injury ; fruit and grain of all kinds are in danger of being spoiled by various accidents ; gold, silver, and jewels, are temptations to robbers, who may in one night deprive the possessor of what he has spent years in accumulating. But the love and favour of GOD, everlasting life, and uninterrupted happiness, the *treasures of heaven*, are out of the reach of every casualty : no one can rob a man of these, neither will they wax old and decay. It is therefore highly essential that every christian should form a right judgment in respect to the superior value of heavenly treasures, lest he become subject to the enticing allurements of earthly riches.

A man intent merely on worldly gain, is in a state of deplorable darkness ; the light of religion is extinct, which would illuminate his mind, and enable him to distinguish real from imaginary good ; and teach him, that liberality is productive of more substantial blessings than covetousness can possibly obtain. But he who has learnt from the Gospel to make a proper use of God's bounty to him, has a sure rule to go by, and may be said to be full of light. The numerous schemes and projects which are requisite to obtain a plentiful fortune, by human wisdom, have a natural tendency to alienate the affections from God. A man engaged in the immoderate pursuit of wealth, is, in fact, an *idolater* ; therefore our SAVIOUR speaks of *riches* as one of
H 3 those

those imaginary deities which the heathen worshipped, to whose service the covetous are devoted, instead of that of their CREATOR ; and exhorts his followers to throw aside all anxious cares in respect to what they shall get to wear when their present clothes are worn out, and what they shall have to eat when their present stock of food is exhausted ; and to rely on the goodness of their *heavenly* FATHER, who, having given them life, is certainly able to bestow whatever is necessary for its preservation.

If the *animals*, and even the *inanimate* creation, which are neither capable of sowing or reaping, or laying up a stock of food and raiment, are clothed and sustained by God's Providence, surely his children, who are much more valuable in his sight, and better furnished with the means of providing for themselves, have no cause at any time to suspect his want of care. No one can increase the period of his life ; but, giving way to anxiety, will rather impair the constitution, and bring on grey hairs and premature death.

Our LORD's allusion to *the birds of the air*, and *the lilies of the field*, are very beautiful, and teach us to derive instruction from the objects that surround us. When we behold the feathered race flying with constant gaiety from place to place, and hear them chant forth their melodious songs from tree to tree, let us remember to place our confidence in the same beneficent Being who provides for their necessities ; and imitate, as far as is consistent with our condition, their cheerfulness. When we admire the beauty of the flowers, which no human art can equal, let us remember, that they are thus adorned by *our* CREATOR, who knoweth that, from the constitution of our bodies, we have need of clothing, and who will certainly furnish us with the means of procuring it.

Let

Let us then lay aside *anxious cares* for future provision, and resolve to discharge every religious and moral duty, which is pleasing in the sight of God; not doubting but that, if it be our lot to *toil and spin*, he will bless our industry; or whether to *sow and reap*, he will give an increase. Let us be liberal to our fellow-creatures in proportion to our circumstances; then we may depend on the promises of God declared by his *beloved Son*, that he will bestow on us all things needful in this present world, and inestimable treasures in the world to come.

SECTION XL.

CONCLUSION OF OUR SAVIOUR'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

From Matthew, Chap. vii.

JUDGE not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye.

Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

Or what man is there among you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Ye shall know them by their fruits: Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Not every one that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Many will say unto me in that day, LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name
have

have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

And then will I profess unto thee, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrines:

For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Scribes and Pharisees were remarkably censorious; they valued themselves on the strictness of their lives, and placed a great part of their religion in condemning others. Our SAVIOUR, to preserve his followers from this fault, cautioned them not to pass unnecessary or uncharitable censures, but to examine their own hearts, and root out from thence all evil, before they presumed to be severe on their brethren and neighbours.

The word here rendered *mote*, is by some supposed to mean a *splinter*; others understand it of a small seed; and some imagine, that the words *mote* and *beam*

signify different distempers in the eye: but whatever is the right interpretation, we cannot well misapply the simile, which clearly teaches, "that it would be as absurd for a bad man to set up for a reprover of others, as for one almost blind himself to pretend to perform operations on other men's eyes."

Our LORD farther reminded his disciples, that however unexceptionable their own characters might be, there was still caution to be used in the reprehension of others; that as they would not cast pearls before swine, neither should they enter into religious arguments with such profane wretches as they knew would deride every sacred subject, and treat the name of God and his holy ordinances with contempt, and in all probability endeavour to injure them for their intended kindness. But, that they might have wisdom and fortitude to direct them in all difficulties, He encouraged them to seek Divine assistance by fervent prayer, and not to despair if they did not immediately obtain their petitions, but to repeat them; not doubting, but that if their prayers were agreeable to the revealed will of God, they would at length certainly be granted; though the SUPREME BEING, to make a trial of their faith and patience, might delay his blessing. For GOD is as ready to grant good things to those who need them, as the tenderest father is to supply the wants of a beloved son; but He requires that they should be sought with fervent and repeated prayer, not with vain repetitions of any form of words, but an earnest lifting up of the heart to Him.

If then God is so ready to satisfy our temporal and spiritual wants, we ought to do every thing in our power to promote the happiness of our fellow-creatures; and in order to do so, we should on all occasions treat them as we should wish to be treated ourselves in their circumstances. *Whatever ye would that men should do*

unto you, do ye even so unto them, is called the *golden rule*, and it ought to be deeply impressed on the mind of every Christian; for it is of general use, being calculated to restrain inordinate self-love, and promote universal charity and good-will. This short maxim is a summary of all the moral precepts contained in the Law and the Prophets.

To *enter in at the strait gate*, signifies to enter upon a Christian life: those who do so are certainly under many restraints in comparison of those who give way to the indulgence of a sensual life; but Christianity restrains its followers from no one thing which is really good for them, and its paths, though strait and narrow, lead to everlasting life; while the broad path, which is so full of allurements, leads us certainly to everlasting destruction.

It is melancholy to reflect, that of the numbers to whom Christianity has been revealed, so few embrace it with sincerity: but since God has made known the conditions on which he will grant us eternal happiness, and has promised to give us strength to perform them, those who decline his grace must take the consequences of their deplorable inattention and obstinacy.

Our SAVIOUR, knowing that many false teachers would arise, who, pretending to divine inspiration, would endeavour to obstruct the progress of the Gospel, cautioned his hearers against their delusions; and gave them a rule to distinguish them, which was, to compare their *words* with their *actions*; and to consider whether their doctrine had a real tendency to promote piety to God, and humility, charity, and other Christian graces. If, on the contrary, it only served to give them a high opinion of their own righteousness, taught them to despise others, or led them into doubtful dis-

putations, they might assure themselves it was corrupt and displeasing to GOD, who would certainly bring it to nought; and that a mere outward profession, even of the true faith, would not conduct his disciples to heaven, unless they lived in conformity to it: for to call CHRIST, LORD, and at the same time to disobey his laws, is a mockery of him, and will justly provoke him to reject such false pretenders at that great day, when all men must appear at his judgment-seat, and hypocrites of all kinds will be consigned to punishment. What our LORD said concerning prophesying and casting out devils, related to the miraculous gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT, of which we shall read in the following part of this history.

“ In the parable with which our LORD concludes, he gives a lively emblem of the ruin which will one day overwhelm the unhappy man who trusts to an outward form of godliness, when he does not sincerely practise it.”

The Scribes, when instructing the people, generally contented themselves with quoting the name and authority of some celebrated doctor of the same age, and that frequently, to confirm some trifling remark, or useless ceremony of human invention; but the discourses of CHRIST were weighty and convincing, always delivered with an air of seriousness, dignity, and authority, becoming the DIVINE WORD. The form, *Verily I say unto you*, so often repeated by our LORD in the Sermon on the Mount, where his decision is opposed to Moses himself, shews a consciousness of the high character with which he was invested; our LORD's general manner impressed his hearers with veneration and astonishment.

SECTION XLI.

JESUS CURES THE CENTURION'S SERVANT, RAISES THE WIDOW'S SON, AND CLEANSSES THE LEPER, &c.

From Luke, Chap. vii.—Matt. viii.—Luke, v.—Mark, i.

Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.

And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.

And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this.

For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.

Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof.

Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.

For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers: and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it,

When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.

And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac,

Isaac, and Jacob. in the kingdom of Heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

And JESUS said unto the centurion, Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.

And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

And when the LORD saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

And he came and touched the bier (and they that bare him stood still), and he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

And he that was dead, sat up, and began to speak: and he delivered him to his mother,

And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God had visited his people.

And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about.

And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold, a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus, fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.

And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man, but go thy way; shew thyself to the priest, and offer the

the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

But he went out, and published it much ; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed of him of their infirmities, insomuch that JESUS could no more openly enter into the city. And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

Now when JESUS saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

And JESUS saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests : but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.

And another of his disciples said unto him, LORD, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

But JESUS said unto him, Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.

And another also said, LORD, I will follow thee : but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house.

And JESUS said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

A centurion was an officer in the Roman army, who had the command over an hundred men. He who applied to JESUS seems to have been, though a heathen, of a very amiable disposition. We may conclude that the servant believed in the power of CHRIST, and, most likely, would have sought to him for relief *himself*, had not the nature of his disease prevented him ; such high veneration did the good centurion entertain for
our

our LORD's person, that he thought himself unworthy to approach his presence: to illustrate his exalted *faith*, he made use of a comparison drawn from his own profession; and declared his belief, that CHRIST could as easily command diseases to disappear, as he could command his soldiers and domestics to do any thing.

These sentiments were so just, that our LORD pointed him out to his followers as an object of admiration; and intimated the propriety of admitting the *Gentiles* to be partakers with the *Patriarchs* in the kingdom of heaven, since they were capable of becoming members of it; solemnly assuring them, that many who lived at the greatest distance from Jerusalem should be received into his Church; while others, who, on account of their natural descent from Abraham, thought themselves secure of inheriting the promises made to him, should be rejected with abhorrence for their unbelief, and be condemned to dreadful punishments.

How happy must the good centurion have been, in this confirmation of his faith! There is no doubt but that he and his servant became sincere disciples to our LORD; and in all probability, his whole household, as well as others who were informed of the astonishing cure, were converted to Christianity.

From the tender solicitude which the centurion expressed for the recovery of his domestic, there is reason to believe the man had endeared himself to him by diligence and fidelity. This transaction, therefore, furnishes a lesson of instruction to servants and masters; the former should conscientiously consult the interest of their employers, and they have then a right to expect in return, kindness on all occasions.

The miracle which our SAVIOUR wrought at Nain, evidently proved that he was not only possessed of almighty

mighty power, but that He also felt the tenderest compassion for the distresses of the human race. When he saw the poor widow drowned in sorrow for the loss of her only son, whom she, with a train of mourners, was attending to the grave, without waiting for solicitation, he hastened to give her comfort. The corpse was not in a coffin, but on a bier, covered over with a kind of winding-sheet (according to the custom of the country.) The words spoken by our LORD, when he approached the bier, proved that he had divine authority; *Young man, I SAY UNTO THEE, ARISE:* and the immediate effect produced, made it manifest that the power of God was *inherent* in him.

When our SAVIOUR had thus restored the youth to life, instead of demanding his attendance on himself, he delivered him to his mother, testifying by this action the pleasure he took in turning her sorrow into joy.

Though it is impossible for us to perform such wonderful works as our SAVIOUR did; yet the relation of them furnishes us, not only with arguments to confirm the belief of his *divine nature*, but also with practical instructions for our own conduct. From the instance we are now considering, we may learn to be compassionate to all persons in affliction; but particularly to exert our endeavours “to wipe tears from widows’ eyes, and make their hearts sing for joy.”

Those who were afflicted with leprosy were objects of great commiseration; for the disease was in itself both painful and loathsome, and excluded the afflicted person from society. Such a miserable creature as a leper readily found the relief he sought from our merciful SAVIOUR, who rewarded his faith by an immediate cure. It is supposed that our LORD took him apart from the multitude, who, it is likely, would have driven him

him away for fear of infection or defilement. The reason of our LORD's commanding the man not to publish the miracle; seems to have been, that the priests might allow the cure to be perfect, before they knew by what means it had been effected, and that it might serve as a testimony of CHRIST's *divine power*; for the Jews confessed; that leprosy was sent and removed by the hand of God alone, and it was not lawful for a physician to attempt the cure of it.

Besides the motive above mentioned for enjoining the man to silence, our LORD was also willing to avoid drawing such a multitude together as would have obstructed the approach of those who came to him for relief, and prevent their hearing his discourses; and we find this was the consequence of the man's inattention to his injunctions; for JESUS soon found himself under the necessity of withdrawing from that city, since his remaining there would have exposed the inhabitants to much inconvenience, from the great concourse of people. We must not suppose that our LORD rejected those whom belief in his power induced to become his followers. As he could heal at a *distance* as well as *near*, and all hearts were open to His view, we cannot doubt but that he healed and comforted ALL who by faith in Him gained his favour, though this was not immediately apparent.

It has been already observed, that whenever our LORD was disengaged from the service of *mankind*, he retired to devotion. Some of his public prayers are recorded by the Evangelists; from these we may judge, that when alone, He earnestly implored the FATHER to bless his ministry, offered thanksgivings for the success of it, and for the honour conferred on his *human nature*, by the union of the DIVINE WORD.

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Our LORD did not withdraw from the multitude for his own ease or conveniency; but having preached the Gospel, and displayed his divine power before such a number of people, there was no occasion for him to remain there any longer; and he resolved to remove, when he saw they were likely to grow tumultuous. Those who were converted to his doctrine were at liberty to follow him; and those who were obdurate would have remained so still, even if he had fixed his abode among them.

As the Scribes had great reputation and authority among the Jews, our LORD, if He had been endeavouring to establish a *temporal kingdom*, would have availed himself of the offer made Him by one of them, to "follow him whithersoever he went:" but from our LORD's answer, which seems to have been addressed to his *thoughts*, we may infer, that he was induced to follow CHRIST, from an opinion that he would shortly be a great prince, and reward his adherents with honours and riches.

As the Scribe's views were *worldly*, he was rejected by his SAVIOUR, who was more pleased with the honest simplicity of the poor fishermen, who were sincerely devoted to his service, than he could have been, even had all the Scribes assembled to make such empty professions.

The fault of the disciple, who requested leave to defer his constant attendance on CHRIST till his father's death, and of him who desired to return home and settle his affairs, were of a very different nature. These men seem to have formed deliberate resolutions to follow the LORD, but were slow in executing them; yet as they were candidates for the honourable employment of being his immediate companions, they should have given him the preference to all persons and things whatever.

ever. Merely to perform the last offices for a father, who, it is probable, was at that time dead ; or to settle a few worldly concerns, and take leave of relations, who, most likely, would have exerted all their influence to detain him, was of no importance in such an emergency ; for there were enough of those who were *spiritually dead*, or *unconverted*, to attend to such particulars. Our LORD, intending to send some of his disciples shortly to preach in different parts, had occasion for their immediate attendance ; and the absence of these persons would have excluded them from the number. We must not from this incident infer, that CHRIST requires *all* Christians to be entirely inattentive to their worldly concerns : for this is not the case. The service he now expects is perfectly consistent with our domestic and social duties ; but it was very different in the beginning of Christianity, when perhaps one person in a family became a convert, and the rest adhered to their prejudices and vices. If, indeed, any extraordinary circumstance should occasion our *spiritual* and *worldly* interests to *clash*, we should, without hesitation, prefer the former, and *leave all to follow CHRIST*.

SECTION XLII.

JESUS STILLS A TEMPEST, AND CURES THE DEMONIACS AT GADERA.

From Luke, Chap. viii.—Matt. viii.—Mark, iv. v.

Now it came to pass on a certain day that he went into a ship, and his disciples followed him, and he said unto them, Let us go over to the other side of the lake ; and they launched forth.

And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea,
insomuch

insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves, but he was in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow, and they awoke him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still: and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

And when he was come to the other side, into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

And one of them, who had devils a long while, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs;

- When he saw Jesus, cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.

(For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains, and in fetters, and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.

And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.

And there was there an herd of many swine feeding
on

on the mountain : and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine : and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choaked.

When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city, and in the country.

Then they went out to see what was done : and came to Jesus, and found the man out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind : and they were afraid.

They also which saw it, told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.

Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about, besought him to depart from them : for they were taken with great fear : and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

Now the man out of whom the devils had departed, besought him that he might be with him : but Jesus sent him away, saying,

Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published through the whole city, how great things Jesus had done unto him.

And it came to pass, that when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him : for they were all waiting for him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

What astonishing events are here related ! Who can doubt the presence of the great CREATOR in CHRIST, when they read that, " he made the storm a calm, so that

that the waves of the sea were still!" None but those who "go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters," can form a proper conception of the tremendous scene, when "the Lord commandeth, and raiseth the stormy winds which lift up the waves thereof. When they mount up, as it were, to the clouds, and go down to the depths of the earth, that the souls of men are melted, because of trouble, they seem to draw near to the gates of death; no effort of strength or reason can prevail, the Lord alone can deliver them from their distress." But the word of omnipotence is sufficient to restrain the fury of the most violent tempest.

Our SAVIOUR knew that it was the will of THE FATHER to give him this occasion of shewing Divine power, and trying the faith of his disciples; he, therefore, with a mind quiet and serene, perfectly satisfied that no evil would happen to Him or his followers, chose this opportunity for taking that refreshment which his *human nature* required. But no sooner did his disciples call upon Him to save them, than he awaked, and his Divine power was exerted for their relief: "Sea, be thou still, said our blessed Lord, and there was a great calm!" At his rebuke the waters fled; at His voice they hasted away! He justly reproveth his disciples for the weakness of their faith. They should have implored his aid with holy confidence instead of fear, since they had sufficient proof of His almighty power, and had seen many instances of His benevolence and kindness; and having so closely attached themselves to him, they had particular reason to expect these attributes to be exerted in their favour. For the sea, which had been so violently agitated, to become suddenly calm, was so miraculous a circumstance, that
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it must have excited the admiration of every beholder, and struck their minds with irresistible conviction of the immediate presence of the Deity, unless they *wilfully* hardened themselves against belief.

The miracle which our SAVIOUR wrought on the demoniacs, was equally astonishing. The poor wretches were tormented in a most deplorable manner, miserable in themselves, and a terror to all who came near them. Driven from society, they wandered among the tombs of the dead, occasionally issuing forth from their gloomy retreat, impelled, by the *devils* who possessed them, to commit outrages on all they met. One of them in particular was, we find, so totally devoid of *reason*, that he declined the necessary comforts of clothing and habitation, wounding his own flesh in a cruel manner, and so exceedingly fierce and uncontrollable, that no fetters could confine, no human being overcome him. This was certainly more than a common disease; for persons in the very worst state of *frenzy* may be managed so as to prevent their doing mischief either to themselves or others; and more than *human strength* is required to break asunder chains and fetters. Such effects may reasonably be imputed to *diabolical possession*; and a *divine* power was necessary to subdue them.

It is conjectured that our LORD crossed the lake of Tiberius, for the very purpose of relieving those two persons, which was a great instance of his benevolence; and it is likely, that the devils had driven the possessed into this unfrequented place to avoid meeting him: but being surprised at his approach, and overawed with his presence, they addressed him as we read, compelled (as we may suppose) by the superior power of God to acknowledge his *beloved* SON.

From the demoniac's answer to our LORD's question
con-

concerning his name, we may conclude, that infernal spirits are *numerous*; and from their request not to be sent into the deep, we may infer, that they expect, at the final judgment, to be consigned to a place of greater torment. The desire of these to enter into the swine, proves that the delight of devils is to do mischief to mankind, either in their bodies or goods.

Though swine were, according to the Jewish law, prohibited as food to the Jews, yet there were great numbers of them kept by the people in those parts, to sell to the Roman soldiers and other Gentiles, who were there very numerous; our LORD might permit the devils to enter the swine, partly to punish the Jews for carrying on this unlawful commerce; but more particularly to prove the reality of the agency and malice of evil spirits, and his power to controul their ill effects.

No sooner was the man delivered from these demons, than his reason returned, every turbulent emotion subsided, and peace was restored to his mind. How must his friends have rejoiced to behold the happy alteration, and with what awful reverence must they have regarded our LORD!

Those who kept the swine were struck with consternation, not knowing what might happen to themselves, and hastened to relate the wonderful story to their employers. These, reflecting on their loss, seem to have considered our LORD, either as one who practised magical arts for the destruction of their property, or as a prophet sent to inflict judgments for their offences; but, instead of humbling themselves and confessing their sins, they besought him to depart out of their coasts, and thus deprived themselves of the greatest honour and advantage they could possibly enjoy: but the person who had experienced the miraculous deliverance, ardently

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desired to be admitted among the number of our LORD's constant attendants. This request was not granted, because, as CHRIST did not stay to preach or perform any more miracles in that coast, it was proper that the man should remain to attest his cure, as a likely mean to convert his countrymen, and incite them to seek the LORD, whom they had rejected. It is remarkable that our SAVIOUR commanded him to *shew what things God had done for him*, and that he published *what JESUS had done*. His own mouth, when under the influence of the infernal spirits, had declared JESUS to be *the Son of God*, the cure performed on him had convinced him, that our LORD was possessed of *divine power*; and he clearly discerned and fully acknowledged the DEITY *manifested in the flesh*.

In the present state of the world, we do not hear of persons being possessed with devils: every disease that attacks the human body may be deduced from natural causes, even madness itself; and though some prove fatal, each kind will, in many cases, admit of relief from medicine. That neither the nature or malicious dispositions of devils are altered, we may reasonably conclude; we must therefore impute their not tormenting mankind as formerly, to our LORD's power and goodness. When He was on earth, He *visibly* ejected them; now He is in heaven, He *secretly* restrains them; and we may safely rely on his merciful protection, if we obey the precepts of the Gospel; for then no *evil being* will have power to hurt us, as we shall be the *children of God*.

SECTION XLIII.

JESUS CURETH THE BLIND AND DUMB DEMONIAK:
DISCOURSES OF BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY
GHOST.

From Matthew, Chap. xii.—Luke, xi.

THEN was brought unto him one possessed with a
devil,

devil, blind and dumb : and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

And all the people were amazed, and said, Is this not the son of David ?

But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of devils.

And JESUS knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation : and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.

And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself ; how then shall his kingdom stand ?

And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out, therefore they shall be your judges.

But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

Or else, how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man ? and then he will spoil his house.

He that is not with me, is against me : and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad.

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men : but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven unto men.

And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

Either make the tree good, and his fruit good : or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt : for the tree is known by his fruit.

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak
 1 2 good

good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things.

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment.

For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Then certain of the Scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

But he answered and said to them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.

For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth:

The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold a greater than Solomon is here.

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

Then he saith, I will return unto my house from whence

whence I came out ; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.

Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there : and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lift up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that thou hast sucked.

But he said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother ? and who are my brethren ?

And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother, and my brethren.

For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The cure our SAVIOUR wrought in restoring the demoniac to the use of his reason, speech, and sight, by casting out the evil spirits, bore such evident marks of divine power, that the multitude would willingly have acknowledged Him to be the MESSIAH ; but the Pharisees, actuated by pride and envy, suggested, that He was in confederacy with the *chief of the devils*. Though JESUS did not hear them say this, he was well acquainted with their secret thoughts ; and, to convince

them that He was, He answered as if they had openly accused Him, and refuted their calumny by irresistible arguments ; first, observing, that supposing Him to be in confederacy with *Satan*, it would be highly impolitic in Him to counteract the devil's design of establishing his power over mankind. Our LORD then retorted upon the Pharisees the reproach they cast upon him ; from which we may judge that some of them pretended to cast out evil spirits, and that some of the Jews believed they did so ; but our SAVIOUR knew, that in this particular they were impostors : and it was only for the sake of the *argument* that he seemed to allow that they were able to perform miracles. This was not a proper season for him to expose their deceit ; our LORD only meant to prove, that casting out devils must be effected by the power of God, since Satan would certainly not lend his assistance for such a purpose ; and if the Pharisees pretended to do it by divine commission, they must allow that our LORD acted by the same authority.

He that is not with me, is against me, was a maxim generally received among them ; what, therefore, must they think of JESUS, who, so far from acting in conjunction with the devil, openly and professedly opposed him?

Having shewn how *unreasonable* and *malicious* their calumny was, our LORD proceeded to declare the *sinfulness* of it ; assuring them, that, in attributing these miracles which were evidently wrought by the *Spirit of God*, to the power of the devil, they were guilty of a crime of the most *unpardonable* kind : as it was an open affront to the divine Majesty, and would not be forgiven either in the present age of the Law, or the future age of the MESSIAH *. Whoever for want of light or in-

* This is what the Jews meant by the present world, and the world to come.

formation should deny JESUS to be the CHRIST, might be pardoned ; because it was only a *personal* reflection on him in his *human nature* : but those who *blasphemed* the HOLY GHOST, excluded themselves from divine grace, and could not expect that assistance from it which is necessary to effect repentance, without which there is no salvation. Our LORD, therefore, warned the Pharisees not to pretend to righteousness, when they were so superlatively wicked ; for, as their minds must be thoroughly corrupted before they could utter such horrid blasphemy, their actions would of course be vicious, and their words malicious and impious. He then assured them, that for all idle words, which proceeded from a wicked heart, they must give account at the day of judgment, and would be condemned accordingly.

We may understand, then, that the *unpardonable* sin was *blasphemy* against the HOLY GHOST, which consisted in saying, that JESUS cast out devils by *Beelzebub* ; and the reason why it was unpardonable seems to be, that it implied, irreconcilable obstinacy, perverseness, and malice ; and no one could be guilty of it, till he was so wicked as to have entirely forfeited the grace of God : in which case it was not probable that he should repent ; but, on the contrary, that he would, like Pharaoh, harden himself in sin.

No Christian can well commit the offence of *blasphemy* against the HOLY GHOST, as it was peculiar to the time of our SAVIOUR'S ministry ; but they may *sin* against the HOLY GHOST, by scoffing at the Scriptures, and ridiculing the miracles which were wrought in confirmation of Christianity ; and if they do not repent, they will certainly be condemned by the righteous Judge, for those idle words which they foolishly and

inconsiderately utter, to the dishonour of God and their SAVIOUR.

Our LORD having asserted, that he acted by divine authority, the Pharisees demanded a sign from heaven in confirmation of it, like those which had been displayed in the days of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Elijah, and Isaiah; but, knowing that they were so degenerate, that nothing could convince them, he refused to give them any; only prophesied of his *resurrection*, in a manner which they could not at that time comprehend, but which was occasioned afterwards by the appearance of an angel.

It was usual for the Jews to think contemptibly of every nation but their own. To humble the pride of the Pharisees, our SAVIOUR drew a comparison between them and the Ninevites, and the Queen of Sheba. The former humbled themselves to the very dust, at the preaching of Jonah. The latter took a long journey to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold the glory of the LORD. The Pharisees rejected the MESSIAH, who came to invite them to be partakers of the kingdom of Heaven, and blasphemed the HOLY SPIRIT, whose operations they must have acknowledged, if they had not hated the light, because their deeds were evil. Well might our SAVIOUR tell them, that “a greater than Jonah was there;” but he forbore to make a farther revelation of his MESSIAHSHIP, on account of their unbelief.

By the relapsing demoniac, our LORD meant to represent that generation of Jews, who, keeping clear from the idolatry practised by their forefathers, and using a number of superstitious ceremonies, pretended to be *cleansed* and *sanctified*; but, instead of being *righteous*, fell into the very worst sort of impiety, that of denying the MESSIAH, and calumniating the HOLY SPIRIT; which must infallibly provoke God to send heavier

heavier judgments upon them, than had been inflicted upon their ancestors.

While our SAVIOUR thus confuted the Scribes and Pharisees, a woman who had, with a humble and teachable mind, attended to his powerful arguments, expressed her high esteem for *him* and his *doctrine*, in an exclamation which implied, that she wished for the honour of being mother to such a son. Our LORD acknowledged that his mother was certainly *blessed*, by the distinction which GOD had conferred upon her; but to encourage the woman to hope, that she might be as happy as his own mother, he assured her, that *faith* and *obedience* would unite his disciples to him more strongly than any ties of kindred; which assurance he had a fresh occasion for repeating, when his mother and brethren desired to speak with him. Nothing, then, can be more absurd than the practice of those mistaken Christians, who *idolize* the Virgin Mary, and even exalt her above the SON of GOD.

How comfortable and inviting, even to the meanest of mankind, is our blessed LORD's assurance, that he will regard, as his nearest relations, all who shall, in their respective stations, do the will of GOD!

SECTION XLIV.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

From Luke, Chap. viii.—Mark, iv.—Matthew, xiii.

AND it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching, and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of GOD; and the twelve were with him;

And certain women, who had been healed of evil spirits, and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils;

And Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who ministered unto him of their substance.

And he began again to teach by the sea-side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea, on the land.

And he taught them many things by parables; and said unto them in his doctrine,

Hearken, Behold, there went out a sower to sow: And it came to pass as he sowed, some fell by the way-side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth, and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth.

And when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up, and increased, and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

And when he was alone, they that were about him, with the twelve, asked of him the parable.

And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them it is not given.

For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that he hath.

Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand.

And

And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, by hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see, and shall not perceive.

For the people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear.

For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and did not see them: and to hear those things which ye hear, and did not hear them.

Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. Those by the way-side are they that hear: then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe, and be saved.

They on the rock, are they which, when they hear, receive the word with joy: and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

And that which fell among thorns, are they which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choaked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

But he that receiveth seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word and understandeth it. Who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keepeth it, and bringeth forth fruit to perfection.

And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and

rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

“The word *parable*, in the New Testament, generally denotes a short comparison and similitude, or a feigned story, consisting of facts which might possibly happen in real life, corresponding to the circumstances of others, for whose instruction it was designed, or to the state of things it was intended to illustrate.” That of the *sower* might be suggested by the view of husbandmen then employed in sowing their seed for the ensuing harvest.

Our SAVIOUR has so fully explained the general import of this parable, that it cannot fail of being understood, even by the meanest reader : but there are some parts which require particular consideration.

In the first place, we are to observe, that our LORD, in a most emphatical manner, calls for the attention of his audience, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!* In his reply to his disciples' enquiry, Why he spake to the people in parables? he informed them, that he used this method in order to exercise the industry of his hearers in the examination of it, that it might make the deeper impression ; and that those who were wilfully resolved to oppose his doctrine, let him preach what he would, and had despised him when he spake plainly, might not discern his spiritual meaning, and consequently derive no advantage from his discourse. This was a just judgment upon them for their unbelief, and it agreed with GOD's dealings with the *ancient Jews*, who turned a
deaf

deaf ear to the preaching of the Prophet *Isaiah*, as the HOLY SPIRIT forewarned him they would do. GOD is said, in both cases, *to have made their ears dull, and to have closed their eyes*; for, knowing that they certainly would *see and not perceive, and hear and not understand*, through their *own obstinacy and prejudice*, GOD did not vouchsafe them the same light as he afforded to those who received his word with humility. Considering the disposition of the Pharisees, it would not have been prudent for our LORD to have spoken more plainly before a mixed multitude.

From * the parable of the sower we may comprehend the method of GOD's proceedings, in respect to bestowing or withdrawing his GRACE; it likewise shews that, in order to obtain salvation, our *own will* must co-operate with *divine goodness*. GOD illumines our understandings by a secret influence, suggests, and excites us to what is right; in consequence of this ability and assistance, we determine and act. He instructs us, and invites our obedience by the natural light of our own minds, by the express revelation of his will, and by the secret whispers and suggestions of the HOLY SPIRIT; but the success of all these methods will turn upon *our complying with or rejecting them*. We may attend or not to the admonitions of *our own minds*; we may *obey or neglect* his revealed instructions; we may *yield to or oppose* the impulses of his HOLY SPIRIT. If we repay GOD's favour with ingratitude, and continue unprofitable under the means of *grace*, he may be provoked to resume his slighted gifts, and withhold the *grace* which we receive in vain: in which case, the sinner is exposed defenceless to the assaults of temptation, and cut off from all communication with GOD. On the

* See Sermons by the late Rev. George Carr, Vol. II.

other hand, if we bend our minds to a compliance with the will of our heavenly FATHER, and are obedient to his directions and guidance, his powerful, though *unseen* grace, will conduct us from virtue to virtue, and will never be wanting to us, if we are not wanting to *ourselves*. Let us then open our hearts to the secret influence of his HOLY SPIRIT, as a thirsty land drinks in the rain as it *silently* descends, and then we shall be neither barren nor unfruitful. *Temporal* good things, God promiscuously bestows on the *just* and on the *unjust*, often on the *evil* and *unthankful*, who neither solicit nor acknowledge his favours; but his GRACE he accounts a pearl of higher price than to be thrown to the negligent and undeserving: He freely gives it to them that ask it; to them that piously implore and justly prize the heavenly gift.—Let us avail ourselves of the light which has been afforded us by Divine revelation, that through God's *grace* we may know all things necessary for our *salvation*, lest we provoke divine justice to leave us to wander in the dark labyrinth of doubt and perplexity, which is our LORD's meaning in his declaration, that *from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath*.

As our LORD's Apostles had not, at the time he delivered this discourse, received the HOLY GHOST, they could not understand the parables without explanation; but he instructed them in the *mysteries*, or the *spiritual sense* of this parable, because they were disposed to understand them, and were to instruct others: but to the multitude he made use of *similitudes*, for the reasons above given.

SECTION XLV.

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES, &c.

From Matikew, Chap. xiii.

ANOTHER parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field :

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

But he said, Nay; lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field;

Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree: so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

Another parable spake he unto them, The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

All these things spake JESUS unto the multitude in parables, and without a parable spake he not unto them.

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Then JESUS sent the multitude away, and went into the house; and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man.

The field is the world: the good seed are the children of the kingdom: but the tares are the children of the wicked one:

The enemy that sowed them is the devil: the harvest is the end of the world: and the reapers are the angels.

As therefore the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world.

The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity:

And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field: the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man, seeking goodly pearls;

Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

Again,

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind ;

Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels ; but cast the bad away.

So shall it be at the end of the world : the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just ;

And shall cast them into the furnace of fire : there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

JESUS saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things ? They say unto him, Yea, LORD.

Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

And it came to pass, that when JESUS had finished these parables, he departed thence.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The fields, which lay near the sea-shore, seem to have furnished our LORD with allusions in the parables of the *tares*, the *treasure hid in the field*, and the *grain of mustard seed* ; the sea itself naturally suggested those of the *merchantman seeking goodly pearls*, and of the *net which gathereth of every kind*. There was something peculiarly pleasing in this method of instruction, which was adapted to all capacities and more likely to be retained than deep reasoning and learned discourse.

By our SAVIOUR'S explanation of the parable of the *tares*, we are taught, that the GOSPEL, represented by the *good seed*, is calculated to produce righteousness in all minds ; but its efficacy is frequently obstructed by
the

the suggestions of the devil, who takes advantage of men's idleness and supineness to lead them into *error*, which is productive of *sin*, and they by this means become the *children of the evil one*: thus it happens that there is in the world a mixture of *good* and *bad* people; so that we find God is not the author of *evil*, but the *devil*. God, indeed, *permits* evil, in order to shew forth his power, justness, and goodness; for he makes even bad men instrumental to the purposes of his providence. Sometimes they become, though they know it not, like the proud Assyrian king, *the staff of God's indignation*, for the chastisement of other sinners; and God frequently renders their darling vices, punishments to themselves. Wickedness also furnishes many occasions for the trial of virtue and the exercise of goodness, and so contributes to the ultimate happiness of the *children of the kingdom*. It would be impossible to entirely extirpate all the *wicked*, without involving the *good* in a variety of misfortunes; we must therefore perceive, that it is better that they should be reserved for a future judgment; and we find that, at the end of the world, our Lord will come with great majesty and solemnity, attended by his holy Angels, to render unto every one according to his deserts.

The comparison of the *good seed* and the *tares*, is not only applicable to the world in general, but may be extended to every Christian in particular. CHRIST sows the seed by affording us the light of the Gospel, and he will supply us with divine grace for the cultivation of it; but *Satan* will endeavour to counteract these gracious purposes, by his delusions and temptations. Each of us, then, instead of censuring the actions of others, should endeavour to reform our own hearts, that, at the great day of final retribution, we may be received into the kingdom

kingdom of heaven, and escape those dreadful punishments, which will be greater than imagination can paint.

Our LORD has not left a particular explanation of the other parables related in this Section; but we may understand by that of the *grain of mustard-seed*, that the Gospel should prevail against all opposition, and at length spread far and near. This parable was *prophetic*, and we now behold the completion of it. The mustard-tree alluded to was of a different kind from what grows amongst us: travellers relate, that in the Eastern countries this plant increases to a very large size.

By the similitude of *leaven* our LORD signified, that inconsiderable as the Gospel then appeared, it would work its way in the world, as leaven, by insensible fermentation, soon spread itself through the whole mass of bread.

The parable of a merchant seeking goodly pearls seems to describe those persons who, in search of *wisdom* and happiness, find by the word of God, that these are included in the *knowledge* and *practice* of CHRISTIANITY.

The net which was cast into the sea signified that persons of all nations would be invited to Christianity; and that many of each would be received and rejected by our SAVIOUR. In this he again alludes to the *day of judgment*.

Thus did our LORD, in a manner somewhat obscure, but sufficiently clear to an attentive mind, teach important truths that were unknown before. He required his Apostles to consider themselves as *Scribes* or *expounders* of the Gospel; intimating, by the comparison of a *prudent householder*, that it was necessary for ministers to lay in a store of Scripture knowledge, that they might be properly furnished for the edification of all who should

should come to them for instruction, and be able to prove divine truths, by arguments drawn either from the old or new dispensation, as occasion might require.

SECTION XLVI.

PART OF ISAIAH'S PROPHECY RELATING TO THE
MESSIAH.

From Isaiah, Chap. lxi.

THE spirit of JEHOVAH is upon me, because JEHOVAH hath anointed me. To publish glad tidings to the meek hath he sent me; to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim to the captives freedom; and to the bounden perfect liberty:

To proclaim the year of acceptance with JEHOVAH, and the day of vengeance of our God. To comfort all those that mourn; to impart gladness to the mourners of Sion; to give them a beautiful crown, instead of ashes; the oil of gladness, instead of sorrow; the clothing of praise, instead of the spirit of heaviness. That they may be called trees approved; the plantation of JEHOVAH for his glory*.

Ye shall be called the priests of JEHOVAH; the ministers of our God shall be your title. Instead of your shame, ye shall receive a double inheritance; and of your ignominy, ye shall rejoice in their portion: for in their land a double share shall ye inherit; and everlasting gladness shall ye possess.

For I am JEHOVAH who love judgment, who hate rapine and iniquity: and I will give them the reward of their work with faithfulness; and an everlasting covenant I will make with them.

* A part of this prophecy is omitted, as it seems to relate entirely to a future restoration of the Jews.

And their seed shall be illustrious amongst the nations, and their offsprings in the midst of the people. All that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are a seed which JEHOVAH hath blessed.

I will greatly rejoice in JEHOVAH; my soul shall exult in my God. For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the mantle of righteousness: as the bridegroom decketh himself with a priestly crown; and as the bride adorneth herself with her costly jewels;

Surely as the earth putteth forth her tender shoots; and as a garden maketh her seed to generate; so shall the LORD JEHOVAH cause righteousness to spring forth, and praise in the presence of all the nations.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In the foregoing passage we may conceive the DIVINE WORD, as speaking by the mouth of the *Prophet*, anticipating the times of the Gospel; describing the office of the MESSIAH, and the happy effects of which his preaching would be productive to the *meek*, or those whose minds were disposed to receive it.

In the Jewish state there was every *fiftieth* year a *Jubilee*, or year of general release of debts and obligations, of bondmen and women, of lands and possessions, which had been sold from the families and tribes to which they belonged. This institution was a type of the release from *spiritual bondage* to be given by the MESSIAH. The year of acceptance with JEHOVAH was (as we may judge) the *Gospel Dispensation*, including the first promulgation of it, and the day of final retribution. During this period *all* who *mourned*, according to the sense in which our SAVIOUR used the word in his Sermon on the Mount, were to be not only *comforted*, but
filled

filled with joy; to be particularly distinguished as a holy people, and to receive a double portion of spiritual blessings.

That they might, when they possessed these inestimable advantages, known from whence they were derived, the Prophet was inspired to speak expressly in the name of JEHOVAH, and promise, that he would HIMSELF bestow on the faithful these rewards which his ANOINTED ONE should publish; and that they would be of eternal duration, and descend from them to their posterity.

The latter part of the prophecy describes the joy and exultation that would arise in the hearts of the faithful, from being, through the mercy of God, *clothed with salvation, and covered with righteousness.*

SECTION XLVII.

JESUS GOETH TO NAZARETH.

From Luke, Chap. iv.—Matt. xiii.—Mark, vi.

AND JESUS returned in the power of the spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read.

And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias; and when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath
sent

sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised :

To preach the acceptable year of the LORD.

And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down : and the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.

And they said, Is not this the carpenter's son ? is not his mother called Mary ? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas ?

And his sisters, are they not all with us ? whence then hath this man all these things ?

And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself : whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

And he said, Verily I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.

But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land :

But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet ; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

And

And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill (whereon their city was built) that they might cast him down headlong,

But he passing through the midst of them, went his way. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages teaching.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was observed in a former Section, that our LORD did not begin his public preaching at Nazareth, thinking it best to establish his reputation in other parts first; as those who had known him in private life, would be most likely to disbelieve his divine mission: and we find that, even after he had in different places given a number of proofs that *he came out from God*, his countrymen were quite averse to receiving him even as a *Prophet*, notwithstanding there were many that followed him, who bore testimony to his wonderful works, and his fame was spread throughout Galilee: such is the force of popular prejudice!

It seems to have been our LORD's constant practice to attend public worship on Sabbath-days, not only for the sake of example to his followers, but to do honour to THE FATHER.

Out of regard to our LORD's reputation for gravity and wisdom, the ruler of the synagogue, after a paragraph of the *Law* had been read, desired him to read a portion of the *holy Writings*, which regularly made a part of public worship.

The books of Scripture did not consist, as ours do, of separate leaves sewed or bound up together, but were each

each written on large scrolls of parchment, and rolled upon two sticks; and this form the Jews still retain in their synagogues. There were seven readers every Sabbath-day, one a Priest, another a Levite, the rest Israelites of that synagogue.

The book of Isaiah was given to our SAVIOUR, who finding the lesson for that day, read it, and sat down, as the custom was, to expound it. The people, having heard of his fame, attentively expected his discourse, when he directly appropriated to himself that part which he read; which was declaring himself to be the MESSIAH, and at the same time explaining the nature of his office. "This day," said he, "is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." The SPIRIT of the LORD is upon me in an extraordinary degree. I am appointed to preach the Gospel, and qualified for the office. I am sent to the meek and humble, to those who are truly penitent, to proclaim the glad tidings of *Salvation*. I am come to those who are bound by their sins, and in spiritual darkness, to bring them deliverance, and open their eyes, that they may be converted, and I may heal them. Behold, *now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation. If you rejoice in the year of jubilee, when your debts are remitted, and your inheritances restored, rejoice *now* when redemption from *death* is promised you, when an *eternal* inheritance is offered. This, we may conceive, was the purport of our LORD's exposition of this famous prophecy; but to describe the gracefulness of his eloquence is impossible, "for never man spake as he spake."

The outrageous behaviour of the Nazarenes justified the sentiments our LORD entertained of them, who gave a fresh proof, that he knew all hearts, "and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what

was in man." The particulars which so enraged the Nazarenes were his comparing himself to two such famous Prophets, and them to those corrupt Israelites who had bowed the knee to Baal ; and they were moreover exasperated, that he should intimate God's intention of shewing favour to the Gentiles. On this occasion, our LORD saved himself from their fury by a miracle ; for, though so justly provoked, he would not depart from the mildness of his character by inflicting any judgment on them ; the rancour of their own obdurate hearts, and the loss of the means of grace, were sufficient punishments ; neither would he submit to their rage, as he had much to do on earth ; but He observed to his disciples, that the unbelief of the Nazarenes was quite astonishing to *human nature*.

Whoever reads this passage of Scripture with attention, and a pious mind, must wonder at the wickedness of the Nazarenes ; let us, therefore, carefully avoid an imitation of their crime. We have no opportunity of *rejecting* our SAVIOUR personally ; but it is equally sinful to reject *his doctrine*. The Nazarenes refused to acknowledge him to be the MESSIAH, because he was their countryman ; many persons in these days deny his *divinity*, because he came in our nature. The offence, I apprehend, is *similar* ; and if we thus dishonour our SAVIOUR, he will neither enlighten our minds, nor deliver us from the evil consequences of our sins ; but will secretly withdraw his grace, and leave us to ourselves.

We may observe, that our LORD did not read the whole of the prophecy ; the reason for which seems to be this, that it was foreign to his purpose to produce any more of it than was necessary to prove that he was the MESSIAH.

SECTION XLVIII.

CHRIST SENDETH OUT THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

From Matthew, Chap. ix.—Mark, vi.

AND JESUS went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogus, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness, and every disease among the people.

But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.

Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.

Pray ye therefore the LORD of the harvest, that he will send forth his labourers into his harvest.

And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he began to send them forth by two and two, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not.

But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give.

Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass, in your purses, nor scrip for your journey; neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: (for the workman is worthy of his meat:)

And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till ye go thence.

And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if

the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words: when ye depart out of that house, or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha, in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues.

And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them, and the Gentiles.

But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in the same hour what ye shall speak.

For it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end, shall be saved.

But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye unto another: for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.

The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.

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It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master; and the servant as his lord : if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household.

Fear not them therefore ; for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed ; and hid, that shall not be known.

What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light : and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops.

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul : But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear : Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell ; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute.

That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation.

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth ; I came not to send peace, but a sword.

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

He that loveth father or mother more than me, is

not worthy of me : and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.

And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it : and he that loseth his life, for my sake, shall find it.

He that receiveth you, receiveth me : and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.

He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward : and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward.

And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

And they went out and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

At thirty years of age, men in the Jewish church might be made doctors, and become teachers of the law: CHRIST being past that age; had a legal right to expound in their synagogues; and he took these occasions of preaching the Gospel, and confirmed the truth of it by many miracles. In his progress through the villages, our LORD was moved with compassion at seeing numbers who stood in need of spiritual instruction, desirous of knowing the truth, but separated and divided by the different opinions of the Pharisees and Sadducees, &c. uncertain what doctrine to rely on. Our LORD pointed them out to his disciples as objects of pity, deserving of
 * their

their prayers; and when he had excited, in the minds of his apostles, sentiments of benevolence, he commissioned them to go and preach in different places; but previous to their departure, he gave them authority over all unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every kind of distemper *through his name*. Our LORD sent them out *two and two*, that they might be agreeable companions, and assistants to each other in their work. He commanded them to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, because it was ordained, that the Gospel should be first preached to the Jews: and he enjoined them not to receive any recompence for the cures they should perform, but to exert their power in an honourable manner, freely imparting to all, as he had imparted to them. To relieve his disciples from solicitude in respect to means for their support, he desired them not to make the usual preparations for their journey, but trust cheerfully to the providence of God, who would sooner work a miracle for their relief, while they were thus immediately engaged in his service, than suffer them to want subsistence. The only circumstance they were to attend to, in respect to their places of abode, was, to make enquiry concerning the character of the inhabitants, as their own reputations would be endangered by an intimate connection with disreputable families; and our LORD assured them, that whoever should entertain them with hospitality, would be repaid with blessings, and that those who rejected them would incur the divine displeasure.

It was customary for the Jews to shew their veneration for their native land, by wiping the dust off their feet, when they returned from a journey to any Gentile country: in allusion to this, our LORD commanded his disciples to do the same, in order to intimate, that those who rejected the Gospel were no longer to be regarded

garded as the people of God, but upon a level with heathen idolaters. Such persons were worse than the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha, because they sinned against more light and greater favour

Our LORD warned his disciples of the hardships they would encounter, not only in the present expedition, but in future; and cautioned them to avoid unnecessary dangers, and to be harmless and inoffensive in their conduct. All that related to the persecutions they would meet with was *prophetic*, and was afterwards amply fulfilled.

From our LORD's expression, that *he was come to send FIRE on earth, &c.* we must not infer, that the *end* of his coming was to *disturb the peace of the world*; it only meant to foretel the cruel dissensions that would arise in families on account of the Gospel, from its being embraced by some individuals and rejected by others, and to warn his followers to prepare themselves for great trials; and also to exhort them to part with their dearest interests rather than renounce their faith.

Thus commissioned and instructed, our LORD's Apostles went forth to preach, and soon found his promise fulfilled; for, though ignorant and illiterate, they were enabled to preach the *Gospel* in a persuasive and affecting manner. Devils came out of the possessed, when commanded *in the name of CHRIST*; and many sick, whom they anointed with oil, as an emblem of our SAVIOUR's healing power, recovered of their diseases. This ceremony seems to have been peculiar to the Apostolic age, and used as a sign of a *miraculous* power of healing; but as practised by the *Roman Catholics* now, it has no efficacy.

Though our LORD's discourse was particularly addressed to the twelve Apostles, there are many parts of it useful to all Christians.

Fear not them that kill the body, &c.

This text teaches us, that *Almighty* GOD should be the supreme object of our fear; and that we should not suffer our dread either of the power, censure, or ridicule of the world, to lead us into any sin.

The very hairs of your head are all numbered, and ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Sincere Christians are under the constant and peculiar protection of GOD, so that no one can possibly injure them without his knowledge and consent. His providence is extended even to the animal creation; his servants, therefore, may safely rely on it.

Whoever shall confess me before men, &c.

It is not only our duty to *believe* in CHRIST, but publicly to *profess* our belief, by an observance of all his divine ordinances, and to endeavour to imitate the example of his virtues. Those who thus honour their SAVIOUR, will be peculiarly honoured in the presence of GOD, and in the sight of Angels.

Those who deny me, &c.

In times of persecution there are many temptations to deny CHRIST: nor is this age of *impiety* and *infidelity* without danger. In every *gay* company, where religion accidentally becomes a topic of conversation, some will be found to turn it into ridicule. Whenever, therefore, we are engaged in such a party, let not the fear of being thought illiberal and precise, lead us to countenance their impious mirth; but let us recall to our minds the words of our SAVIOUR, and not be afraid or ashamed to own ourselves CHRISTIANS.

Whoever shall give drink to one of these little ones, &c.

The smallest favour done to the meanest Christian for the sake of CHRIST, will be accepted by our benevolent SAVIOUR as if done to himself, and rewarded both

with present and future blessings. And it is the same in respect to honouring God's faithful ministers, or esteeming any other person, on account of his Christian profession.

He that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me.

This relates principally to the times of persecution; but it may be universally applied, since there is no Christian exempt from trials and afflictions.

SECTION XLIX.

THE DISCOURSE CONCERNING JOHN THE BAPTIST—
THE UPBRAIDING OF BETHSAIDA, &c.

From Matthew, Chap. xi.—Luke, vii.

AND it came to pass, when JESUS had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of CHRIST, he sent two of his disciples,

And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

JESUS answered and said unto them, Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

And 'blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.

And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind, he gave sight.

And as they departed, JESUS began to say unto the multi-

multitudes concernig John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he.

And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

For all the prophets, and the law, prophesied unto John.

And if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the council of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

And the LORD said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and what are they like?

They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced: we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.

For John the Baptist came neither eating bread, nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.

• The Son of Man is come eating and drinking ; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.

• But wisdom is justified of all her children.

Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because, they repented not.

Wo unto thee, Chorazin ; wo unto thee, Bethsaida : for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

And thou, Capernaum, which are exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell : for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee.

At that time Jesus answered, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father : and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father : neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

ANNO-

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

While the Baptist was shut up in prison, he was prevented from bearing public testimony to JESUS as the MESSIAH; but it appears, that some of his disciples, instead of following JESUS, as John had directed them to do, still resorted to him; and that the jealousy they had formerly entertained for the honour of their Master, was increased by the great success of our SAVIOUR's ministry. They represented to John the wonderful things which were related concerning our LORD's ministry; and, it is probable, debated among themselves, whether he was the CHRIST, or Elias, whom the Jews in general expected to appear on earth before the coming of the MESSIAH. By thus obstinately adhering to their Master, these disciples frustrated the great end of his mission: instead, therefore, of repeating his testimonies, which had made no impression on them, John referred them to JESUS himself; and they accordingly came with the same kind of question they had proposed to the Baptist, enquiring, as if in their Master's name, *Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* Instead of making a direct answer, our LORD in their presence performed many miracles, and appealed to these, as proofs of his *Messiahship*; and then commanded John's disciples to return to their Master, who would undoubtedly confirm their belief in CHRIST, by shewing that the Prophets had foretold such things of the MESSIAH. Our LORD also admonished them to lay aside the prejudices which had hitherto obstructed their *faith*, that they might be partakers of the blessings which he came to dispense.

When the disciples were gone, our SAVIOUR delivered an illustrious testimony to the Baptist's character; observing,

serving, " that he was a man of rigid virtue, of honest upright principles, the very opposite of those who delight in the luxuries of a court. He was not a reed shaken with the wind, but immoveable in principle, and steady in testimony. He appeared a *Prophet* in unfolding the genuine sense of ancient prophecies, and enforcing them with circumstances unknown and original; in opening and characterising the Gospel-kingdom of the MESSIAH, in proclaiming his immediate approach, and predicting many of his attributes."

And *even more than a Prophet*, in baptizing the MESSIAH to his office, in attesting his actual presence, in pointing him out in person as the Redeemer and Sanctifier of the world, and the *Son of God*.

" But, notwithstanding the great honour and advantage the Baptist enjoyed, every Christian is superior to him, as comprehending more evangelical truths than he could do who died before our SAVIOUR. John was the Herald to proclaim the kingdom of God to be at hand; but every Christian is a member of it. John only expected what every Christian has seen fulfilled *."

Those who thought themselves entitled to enter into the kingdom of heaven, the Pharisees and doctors of the law, were excluded from this kingdom; while many of those whom they esteemed unworthy, became members in defiance of them: this seems to be the meaning of *the violent taking it by force*.

To prevent any farther expectations of the Prophet Elijah, our LORD solemnly assured his followers, that John was the very person who was to appear in the spirit and power of Elijah.

+ " There was a great contrast between the character of JESUS and John. JESUS lived in cities and public

* Bishop Newton's Dissertations.

† Ibid.

places,

places, and was of a social turn, John sought retirement and solitude: JESUS was indulgent, John rigid and severe; so that persons of all tastes might be gratified. Our SAVIOUR pointed out this difference between himself and his forerunner, and exemplified by a parable the inconsistency of the Jews in rejecting them both; and added, that though those who pretended to be wise and learned presumed in this manner to slander them, those who were truly wise and religious would admire the beautiful variety in the conduct of divine Providence, which was so adapted to answer different purposes, and to promote the general design of GOD's glory and man's salvation."

Among the sinful generation of the Jews, the cities of Bethsaida and Chorazin, which had enjoyed the advantage both of John's ministry and our SAVIOUR's, were the most inexcusable excepting Capernaum, which our LORD had particular reason to upbraid, because it had been his principal place of residence, where he had spent much time, wrought a number of miracles, and delivered many excellent discourses. *Tyre* and *Sidon* were deserving of their fate, because they abounded in luxury, pride, and contempt of religion; crimes to which, as national ones, GOD seems to have annexed, from the *beginning*, peculiar judgments. The vices in Sodom and Gomorrha, which provoked the divine vengeance, were so heinous, that those who practised them were not fit to live in society; and those who connived at them, exposed themselves to the danger of being involved in that punishment, which there was reason to think would fall upon such impious offenders: but our LORD knew, that there were in each of these cities some who would have repented, if they had been as well instructed as the inhabitants of Bethsaida and
Chorazin,

Chorazin, only it was not consistent with the *gradual* display of Christianity that they should be so : he therefore intimated, that, though all had been included in the *temporal* calamities that destroyed those cities, a discrimination would be made at the day of judgment, and allowance given for sins of *ignorance*, to which the inhabitants of Bethsaida, &c. could lay no claim.

By the expressions, being *lifted up to heaven*, and *brought down to hell*, as applied to the *towns*, is only meant a great degree of exaltation and abasement. In our SAVIOUR'S time these three places were wealthy cities, but they were afterwards reduced to inconsiderable villages.

The crime which our LORD imputed to these cities was not want of *faith*, but of *repentance* ; from which we may infer, that though many believed him to be sent from GOD, few were inclined to reform their lives. This affords an important lesson to all Christians.

There is reason to suppose, that our LORD felt a compassionate concern for these wretched cities, and was comforted with reflections on the happiness afforded to the humble ; on which he brake out into that benevolent exclamation, " I thank thee, O Father," &c. expressive of his sense of GOD'S righteous dealings with the Jews, and his own acquiescence in the sovereign will and pleasure of the FATHER.

Our LORD next informed his followers, that all *power* was given unto him ; that he was intimately united with the FATHER, but in a manner so *incomprehensible*, that no man could conceive the nature of the union ; that he had a perfect conception of the SUPREME BEING, which no mere man could have ; neither could any know all that they were capable of *understanding* in relation to the DEITY, unless it were revealed

vealed to them by the Son, who was commissioned to make a *covenant of peace* with mankind: our LORD then graciously invited all who were laden with iniquity, or in bondage to ceremonial observances, to submit to his precepts, which would ease their minds from the heavy burden they at present laboured under; since his precepts were the most easy to practise, most agreeable to reason, infinitely preferable to a licentious freedom of mind, and such as would infallibly secure them from the woes denounced against Bethsaida, &c. No farther preparation, he intimated, was necessary for their coming to him, than *humility of mind*; and in this particular they had the advantages of his own example, who, notwithstanding the dignity of his character, humbled his soul to God, and disdained not to instruct and benefit mankind.

From this Section we learn the danger of *hearing* or *reading* the Gospel, only to despise it. Let us then reflect on our religious privileges, and improve them.

Since persons of superior understandings are frequently, through their own pride, obstinacy, and inattention, ignorant of divine truths; while others, who are, in respect to their general knowledge, babes in comparison, possess the truest wisdom; let us imitate the simplicity of the latter, and recur to the *Word of God* contained in the Scripture for instruction. And as all things are delivered to the SON by the FATHER, let us implore the SON to give us the true knowledge of the FATHER, and listen with joy to his gracious invitation, that we may be eased of our burdens of sin and sorrow.

SECTION L.

THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

From Mark, Chap. vii.—Matthew, xiv.

AND when a convenient day was come, that Herod, on his birth-day, made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee :

The daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him.

And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

And she came in straitway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by, in a charger, the head of John the Baptist.

And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,

And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.

And when the disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse and laid it in a tomb.

When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship, into a desert place, apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

"It has been already mentioned, that this Herod was Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. Philip was not he who was Tetrarch of Iturea, but a younger brother, named Herod Philip. Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, another son of Herod the Great; she was niece to her husband. Herod seduced her from his brother, who was a private person, and tempted her to partake with him the pleasures of a court, promising to marry her, and put away his present wife, the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia.

Herodias was convinced of the great regard which Herod entertained for John the Baptist, and that it was in vain to attempt persuading him to put him to death in his hours of calm reason and reflection; but she impatiently watched for an opportunity of being revenged on one whom she regarded as her worst enemy. At length a public festival was kept for the celebration of the king's birth-day, when she introduced Salome, the daughter whom she had while she lived with Philip, a young lady remarkable for her beauty; and in order to gain the favour of Herod, desired her to dance before the company. The circumstances of this shocking story chill one with horror! Who could suppose any mother would be wicked enough to command her daughter to make such a barbarous request, as to have a good, an innocent man slaughtered, to gratify her revenge? Who would think any daughter could so totally overcome the tenderness natural to her sex and youth as to comply with it? As for Herod, he surely must have been in a state of intoxication; yet it appears that he had not lost the power of reflection, for he was *exceeding sorry*; yet, for his *oath's sake*, and lest his guests should despise him for the breach of it, he resolved to keep it.

* Bishop Newcome's Dissertation; also Josephus's Antiquities.

We may conclude that all the company bore secret enmity to John, on account of his preaching up repentance and amendment of life, for not one became his advocate; and he died a martyr, after having lived a life of exemplary holiness.

From this transaction we learn, that malice and revenge, if they once take possession of the mind, know no bounds, and naturally incline the heart to acts of cruelty: every one therefore should endeavour to stifle the first emotions of them. It likewise instructs us, that it is dangerous to indulge in sensual pleasures, since virtue and humanity generally fall a sacrifice to them. We are also taught that rash oaths and inconsiderate promises should be carefully avoided, since they usually produce both sin and sorrow.

Let those who despise the cruelty and ingratitude of Herodias, be thankful when they are admonished for their good; and let those who are shocked at the horrid command which she gave to her daughter, rejoice that they have better parents; but should it be the unhappy lot of any who read her history to have bad parents, let them steadily resolve not to comply with any *sinful* commands, but to perform their duty to God in the first place. Nothing can sink a woman in the eyes of the world more than *cruelty*, because it is the very reverse of that *tenderness* which is the characteristic of her *sex*, and which is absolutely necessary to enable her to perform the offices of the *wife*, the *mother*, and the *friend*.

After the eulogium which our SAVIOUR passed upon John the Baptist, it is needless to say any thing farther on his character. *Why* it pleased God to suffer him thus to fall by the hands of his enemies, we are not told, but may be certain it was for wise and good purposes.

poses. John had done the work which the LORD appointed him to do; and it was the will of the Almighty to take him to a better world. There is, I think, no doubt but that his mind was thoroughly prepared for death; and if so, an *execution* was much less pain than a disease would have been: besides, it was more honourable to die by martyrdom than by a *natural* death, and a glorious reward is annexed to martyrdom. Before John was imprisoned, there were great dissensions between his disciples and those of JESUS; and had he continued at liberty, it is likely these would have produced greater divisions; or had he retired from the world, his doctrines might have been forgotten: but, without doubt, John continued, when in prison, to bear private testimony to JESUS, for he was not a reed shaken with the wind of persecution. It was supposed that John was in the prison a year and a half; during which time our LORD wrought so many miracles, that his fame spread far and near, and John's disciples were at length convinced that he was the MESSIAH, and after the death of their Master resorted to him.

On hearing that John was beheaded, our SAVIOUR retired into the desert, knowing, as we may suppose, that Herodias would seek his life; which it was not proper to expose to her rage, as his ministry was not yet completed.

SECTION LI.

JESUS EATS WITH SIMON THE PHARISEE. — THE
PARABLE OF THE TWO DEBTORS.

From Luke, Chap. vii.

AND one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

And

And behold a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that JESUS sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster-box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner.

And JESUS answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?

Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many,

many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

And they that sat at meat with him, began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is probable that the Pharisee invited our LORD with a view to ensnare him in his discourse; and JESUS, knowing what was proper to be done on all occasions, resolved to accept the invitation.

It was not the custom to sit upright at dinner, but to lie in a reclining posture, so that the feet went slanting from the table, and each person's head came to the breast of him who sat next him. It was usual for servants to wash the feet of the guests with water, and anoint their heads with odoriferous ointment, or at least with oil.

The woman who followed our LORD to the Pharisee's house, is supposed to have been a *Gentile*; and it is imagined that she had before been converted by our SAVIOUR's preaching, and pardoned by him. Piously affected with his benevolence, she was desirous of giving some public testimony of her thankfulness. Thus did she honour our LORD, while the Pharisee, notwithstanding his pretended knowledge of the Scriptures, could not discover that he was even a *Prophet*; but JESUS, to prove that he was more than a Prophet, replied to his secret thoughts, and justified the woman's action, and his own permission of it.

Our LORD's professing to forgive sins, gave great offence to the Pharisees; but instead of entering into an argument concerning his power to forgive sins, which he had

had on a former occasion discussed *, and to prevent their supposing that their own righteousness would save them, he told the woman, that “ her *faith* had saved her;” intimating to these Pharisees the *necessity* of FAITH, and assuring the woman of the *efficacy* of it.

From our LORD’s parable, and this application of it, we learn, that all SIN is a *debt*, which as sinners cannot pay, they stand in need of forgiveness: and that God, in his infinite goodness, will pardon those that have a true *faith* in his mercy through CHRIST: that those who are thus pardoned, are bound to adore and love their GOD and SAVIOUR, and consequently to shew their faith by forsaking their sins, and living for the future according to the divine law, as far as human frailty will permit; in which case their minds will be restored to peace and serenity. Let us then, as we are all sinners, endeavour by sincere repentance and faith in CHRIST, to obtain God’s pardon; and be thankful for the hope of salvation: and let us charitably refrain from censuring others.

SECTION LII.

HEROD’S OPINION CONCERNING JESUS.

Matthew, Chap. xiv.—Mark, xi.

AT that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of JESUS, for his name was spread abroad.

And he was perplexed, and said unto his servants, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things?

And some said, It is Elias. And others said, that it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.

* See Section xxxix.

But Herod said, It is John the Baptist whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

And he desired to see him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In the account here given of Herod, we have a lively instance of the power of CONSCIENCE, that inward monitor, which the Almighty hath implanted in the human breast to incite us to virtue, and restrain us from vice, and to serve occasionally as our comforter or tormentor.

Conscience is, by a sacred writer, called *The candle of the LORD*, which serves not only to discover to us, by its light, what our duty consists in, but revives also and cheers us with its bright beams when we do well; and when we do ill, is as a burning flame to search and consume us. It is therefore the interest of every one to obey its dictates: for whoever wilfully acts in defiance of them, will most certainly feel in the end bitter anguish and remorse.

When Herod was solicited to put the Baptist to death, his conscience informed him, that it would be a very barbarous, ungrateful, and unjust action; but rather than give offence to an infamous woman, and expose himself to the censures of a set of corrupt courtiers, he gave orders for his execution.

From this time we hear no more of Herod, till we are told of his alarm at the report of our SAVIOUR's miracles; but from this circumstance we may infer, that he suffered, as other sinners do, from the reproaches of conscience; and that, however he might strive to banish painful reflections, they were awakened by the slightest accident. Had his mind been calm and serene, he

would have easily discovered, that our LORD was not *John* returned from the dead, but that HOLY ONE for whose reception the Baptist had endeavoured to prepare the Jews. But the king's fears suggested, that the righteous man he had murdered was come from the grave to take vengeance for his iniquities and his own wrongs: he therefore, forgetful of his high state and character, expressed his apprehensions to his very servants: for they operated so strongly on his mind, that he could not conceal them.

Since the reproaches of conscience are so powerful, let us endeavour to secure its applauses; and, in order to do so, we must avoid committing any actions that we know to be sinful, and perform, to the best of our abilities, every thing that the natural light of our own mind shews us is right. The highest worldly pleasure cannot counterbalance the pangs of guilt, which are always proportioned to our crimes. Let then no temptation, no interest, no influence whatsoever, sway us to do any thing contrary to the suggestions of conscience. Let us no more dare to do in private what that tells us ought not to be done, than if the eyes of the whole creation were upon us; for if we escape the observation of men, the watchful witness within will record our faults, and will one day certainly reprove us and set our misdeeds before us; and, according to its report, shall we be condemned or acquitted by our righteous Judge *.

* There is an excellent Sermon on this subject by Bishop Atterbury, from whence the above reflections are chiefly extracted.

SECTION LIII.

THE APOSTLES RETURN TO JESUS.—THE MIRACLE OF FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND WITH FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISHES.

AFTER these things, JESUS went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberius.

And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.

And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

And the Apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

And they departed into a desert place by ship privately, belonging to the city of Bethsaida.

And JESUS went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.

And JESUS, when he saw much people, was moved with compassion, and healed them that had need of healing, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place.

He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?

And he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

(And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do) Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

And Jesus said, Make them sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

And they sat down in ranks by hundreds, and by fifties.

And Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes, as much as they would.

And they did all eat and were filled. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

When JESUS therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

And straightway JESUS constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The law of Moses ordained, that every man of the house of Israel should present himself before the LORD three times in a year, at the three great festivals; and we are here told, that "the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh:" from whence we may judge, that the disciples returned to their Master, with a view of attending him to Jerusalem, to keep this solemn festival.

The Apostles, as they were sent out in the name of CHRIST, were accountable to him, both for what they did and preached.

They punctually executed the commission our LORD gave them, and had the happiness of receiving his approbation, as we may judge from the tender solicitude he expressed, that they should enjoy some repose after the fatigues they had lately undergone, and avoid the continual interruption given by the multitude; but though they by this means gained a little respite, the people, observing the course they steered (which they might very well do, as this desert was divided from the place they set out from by a creek or bay of the sea) resolved to go thither on foot; so great was their impatience to attend our LORD. With what amiable kindness did CHRIST receive them! and with what tenderness did he consider their unhappy condition, neglected by their spiritual guides, and obliged to wander from place

to place in search of instruction! Instead of dismissing them with anger for breaking in on his retirement, our LORD immediately began to instruct and heal them.

The request which the disciples made to our SAVIOUR, was very natural, as they could not foresee his gracious design; and though it was completely formed in his own mind, he did not immediately declare his intentions, as he meant to shew what a slender supply of provisions they had, that the miracle might appear the more wonderful. From Philip's answer, and the proposal of one of the disciples to buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, we may conjecture that the common purse kept to supply our LORD and his Apostles with the necessaries of life, contained no more than that little sum, amounting to about six pounds five shillings. How must they be astonished, when he desired them to divide their small stock of provisions among such a great company, who, by his particular directions, were placed in regular rows on the grass, that their number might the more easily be ascertained.

When our divine LORD had taken the loaves and fishes into his hands, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and returned thanks to the FATHER; by which he expressed the gratitude of his soul for the honour conferred on his *human nature*, and intimated to the multitude, that the power he was about to exert was *divine*, and such as no *mere man* could possess. He then blessed the loaves and fishes, which multiplied under his hands; thus proving that the DIVINE WORD, which created all things, was actually in him.

It is true, that miracles of the same nature had been wrought in the time of Elijah and Elisha; but an attentive reader may observe a great difference between these Prophets and our SAVIOUR. So far from pretending

ing to have a *divine power* inherent in them, they constantly referred the honour of these mighty works to the LORD *. Our SAVIOUR was the LORD Himself, incarnate, or dwelling in the flesh; but, in respect to his *human nature*, inferior to the FATHER; and therefore while he acted as GOD, he felt gratitude as *Man*, knowing that, without the *union* of the DEITY, he could not have performed such wonderful works.

The loaves were of the coarsest kind of bread, and the fishes very small ones; from whence we may infer, that our LORD and his Apostles contented themselves with the plainest food. This teaches us a lesson of temperance and moderation.

Our SAVIOUR commanded that the fragments which remained should be gathered together, that nothing might be lost. From hence we are instructed, not to waste the provisions which are given us by Providence for our sustenance and refreshment; but to remember, that though we are satisfied, there are still many who want; for whom we should reserve the superfluities, and not throw on the grass, to be devoured by the beasts and fowls, that food which was given for man, since the appetites of those creatures may be satisfied with victuals improper for the human kind to eat.

When our LORD found that the people were determined to take him by force, and make him a king, he retired; for he regarded not worldly honours, which, however desirable they may appear to sensual minds, have no charms for those who look for a *heavenly kingdom*, much less could they engage the attention of the MESSIAH, the HOLY ONE, who was to reign over this kingdom.

* See 1 Kings, xvii. 14. 2 Kings, iv. 43,

The people who said, *This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world*, alluding to the following prediction of Moses*.

The LORD thy GOD will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me: and unto him shall ye hearken.

According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy GOD in Horeb, in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my GOD, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.

I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

From this passage we learn, that in compliance with the request of the people of Israel, that they might no more behold such an awful display of the divine Majesty as they had beheld on Mount Sinai, God graciously promised that he would, instead of speaking unto them in thunder, and appearing in fire, raise up a prophet like unto Moses, to be, as we may understand, a *Lawgiver* and a *Mediator*, and that he put *his own Words* in the mouth of that Prophet, who should be one of the Jewish nation.

Our SAVIOUR was the only person since Moses who appeared as a lawgiver to the people of Israel; and there was great resemblance between their characters in many particulars, which none of the intervening Prophets had

* See Deut. Chap. xviii.

possessed. It was likewise evident, that the LORD had put his words into our SAVIOUR's mouth; "for no man could speak as he spake, except GOD were with him." Many of the Jews were struck with the resemblance, and convinced, that he must be *that Prophet that should come into the world*, on which account they desired to make him their king.

Whoever believes that JESUS was the Prophet, in whose mouth the LORD put *his own words*, cannot, consistently with that belief, refuse to hearken to him; and whatsoever he hath taught, it is their indispensable duty to believe. Now, though Moses spake of the MESSIAH merely as a Prophet, our LORD proved himself to be *more*; and repeatedly declared, that he spake the very words of GOD, in consequence of an *intimate union* with the DEITY. Let us, therefore, pay attention to *all* which he has revealed; remembering that, if we do not, God will call us to account*.

SECTION LIV.

JESUS WALKETH ON THE SEA:

From Matthew, Chap. xiv.

AND when JESUS had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

And in the fourth watch of the night, when they had rowed about five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs, they

* See a comparison between our SAVIOUR and Moses, in Bishop Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies.

see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship : and they were afraid,

Saying, It is a spirit : and they cried out for fear, For they considered not the miracle of the leaves, for their hearts were hardened.

But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer, It is I, be not afraid.

And Peter answered him, and said, LORD, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the water.

And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid : and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, LORD, save me.

And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ?

And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. And immediately the ship was at the land, whither they went.

Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.

And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased, and besought him, that they might only touch the hem of his garment ; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It seems to have been our LORD's constant practice to retire to prayer, after every extraordinary display of divine power; for he never forgot that this power was derived from GOD the FATHER, and such as he could not have obtained by human means.

After the wonderful miracle which JESUS had lately wrought, one would have supposed that his disciples, instead of being terrified and astonished at beholding him walk on the surface of the sea, would rather have fallen into transports of joy that he was come to save them; but from the expression, *their hearts were hardened*, we may judge that they still continued to desire that he might declare himself king of Israel.

Simon Peter was of a warm and zealous temper, ready to undertake any thing his LORD required; but his resolution was apt to fail in times of extreme danger. Our SAVIOUR knew and pitied the frailty of his nature, and, on his calling to him to save him, stretched forth his hand immediately, gently reproving him for doubting of his protection.

It must have been very amazing to every one on board to find themselves *suddenly* at "the haven where they would be*," after all their ineffectual toil to reach it. This was a very extraordinary circumstance, and as miraculous as his walking upon the sea. Those who beheld this astonishing transaction, professed their faith in CHRIST, by paying adoration to him as the *Son of God*; and who that reads of it can forbear to do the same?

No sooner was Christ arrived at the land of Gennesaret, than the inhabitants flocked to him; and that the whole neighbourhood might have the benefit of his

* Psalm cvii. 30.

coming, they sent to the adjacent places to give notice of his arrival. It is likely, by the extraordinary respect which the multitude shewed at this time, that it partly consisted of those who had been partakers of the miraculous supply of loaves and fishes. They must certainly have believed that **JESUS** was a divine Being, otherwise they could not have supposed that the mere touching him would effect their cure; and as such was their faith, our **LORD** was pleased to confirm it by a great number of miracles.

Though we never can be exactly in the situation that the Apostles were, and, therefore, strictly speaking, can neither imitate nor avoid the errors of their conduct, yet the history of this transaction abounds with spiritual instruction, which may be generally applied.

Christians, in order to exercise their faith, are frequently exposed to the storms and tempests of adversity, when, forgetful that their **SAVIOUR** is always at hand to hear them, they are too apt to give way to terror and apprehension, till he kindly speaks peace to their souls, by the inward efficacy of his grace, or by the consolations of his written word.

The number of persons who are, like *St. Peter*, zealous to come to **CHRIST**, and who profess resolution to endure all dangers and sufferings for his sake, is now comparatively small: but these few may learn, that they may safely rely on the divine protection in all emergencies, if they will call on their **SAVIOUR** with fervour and humility.

SECTION LV.

JESUS DISCOURSES WITH THE JEWS CONCERNING
BREAD.*From John, Chap. vi.*

THE day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea, saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that JESUS went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone :

(Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberius, nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the LORD had given thanks.)

When the people therefore saw that JESUS was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for JESUS.

And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither ?

JESUS answered them, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed.

Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we may work the works of God ?

JESUS answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou, then, that we may see, and believe thee ? what dost thou work ?

Our

Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Then JESUS said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of GOD is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

Then said they unto him, LORD, evermore give us this bread.

And JESUS said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me, and believe not.

All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me: and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out:

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

And they said, Is not this JESUS the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?

JESUS therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life.

Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

The Jews therefore strove amongst themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so, he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead; he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying, who can hear it?

When

When JESUS knew in himself, that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?

What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?

It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life:

But there are some of you that believe not. For JESUS knew from the beginning, who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

And he said, Therefore said I unto you, That no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of the Father.

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

Then said JESUS unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

Then Simon Peter answered him, LORD, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that CHRIST the son of the living God.

JESUS answered them, Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

By the *meat that perisheth*, is to be understood mere worldly advantages of every kind, which are certainly of a perishable nature, and must have an end. By *that meat which endureth for ever*, our LORD evidently meant *Salvation*. By calling himself the SON of MAN, he, in fact, declared that he was the MESSIAH, who, in respect
to

to his human nature was *sealed by GOD the FATHER*, or separated from the rest of human kind, to be in union with the **ETERNAL SON OF GOD**. Our **LORD's** answer to those who asked him, *what shall we do that we may work the work of GOD?* plainly teaches, that **FAITH**, or belief in the **MESSIAH**, was not only to supersede the ceremonial works of the law, but to supply the deficiency of that perfect obedience to the divine will which was required of man in a state of innocence.

When the Jews intimated a wish that **JESUS** would prove the truth of his doctrine by giving them *manna* as **MOSES** had done, our **LORD** taught them that *manna* was no more than a type or figure of the **MESSIAH**, who might justly be called the *true bread of life*, because all who believed in him should, through him, receive a *principle of life*, which should never be destroyed; nor would they ever have occasion to go to any other but him for spiritual nourishment. By those *whom the FATHER would give him*, we may understand all who were to be saved under the **CHRISTIAN COVENANT**, namely, those who should testify a true faith; these **CHRIST** will own as his members, and as such they will have a glorious resurrection, and will assuredly enjoy everlasting life.

The words, *No man can come to me, except the FATHER which has sent me draw him*, may be understood to signify, that none but those who have a sincere desire to please **GOD**, and to be taught of **GOD**, can become Christians. Whoever willingly receives our **SAVIOUR's** doctrine, and believes in him, may be said *to be taught of GOD*, for **CHRIST** is truly **GOD**, and his doctrine is heavenly. It is not necessary to see and converse with the **ALMIGHTY FATHER**, in order to be taught of Him: for divine instruction is communicated to mankind from the **FATHER** by the **WORD OF THE LORD**, the **ETERNAL**

NAL SON OF GOD, and by the HOLY GHOST. THE SON is the true Bread of Life, for everlasting life comes by Him alone. *To eat of the Bread of Life*, in a figurative sense, signifies, to receive with Faith the doctrine of Salvation through CHRIST. *To eat the flesh and drink the blood of CHRIST*, may be understood to allude to the SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, which our SAVIOUR designed to ordain. This part of our LORD's discourse was quite unintelligible to the Jews, and it was not clearly understood even by his disciples till after his resurrection, though calculated to furnish instruction and comfort to sincere Christians, to the end of the world. All might however perceive that the general design of it was to teach them to prefer *spiritual* to *worldly things*, and to expect eternal life, through CHRIST, and Him alone. Our LORD's words concerning the SON of MAN's *ascending where he was before*, certainly alluded to the pre-existence of His divine nature, and to His ascension into heaven after His resurrection. Such doctrine as our LORD here taught was entirely of a spiritual nature; it had no reference to this mortal life; and those whose minds are engrossed by worldly desires cannot comprehend it. The disciples who left our SAVIOUR upon this account, must have been those who followed him with the expectation of his establishing an *earthly* instead of a *heavenly kingdom*. From the words, *he knew from the beginning who it was that should betray him*, we may infer that before CHRIST entered upon his ministry, he was made acquainted with every circumstance relating to his sufferings, and that he willingly undertook the salvation of mankind. Our LORD's question to the twelve was a very affecting one, *Will ye also go away?* Peter's answer was that of a true Christian, LORD, *to whom should we go? thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe,*
and

and are sure, that thou art that CHRIST, the Son of the living GOD.

Our LORD spoke of the disciple who he knew would betray him as a *devil*, because he foreknew that, instead of being drawn of GOD, or having a due regard to the divine will, he would yield to the suggestions of the devil. This discourse of our blessed LORD, abounds with the most important instruction, and calls for the serious consideration of all who are desirous of eternal life; as it shews the way of obtaining it, namely, by spiritually eating the true Bread of Life. Let us not reject our Saviour's doctrine, and go away from him, like some of his first disciples, because it does not fall in with our worldly desires, but rather let us imitate the example of Peter, whose reply leads us to consider the miserable condition of those who forsake CHRIST, having no other to trust in; the excellency of his religion, and the certain means it affords of obtaining a blessed life after this; and the authority and divine commission of CHRIST, on which our faith and confidence in him are built. And let us hold fast the profession of our *faith* without wavering; for then will divine grace, co-operating with our own will, draw us nearer and nearer to our SAVIOUR, who will finally reward us with everlasting life *.

SECTION LVI.

JESUS HEALS THE IMPOTENT MAN AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

From John, Chap. v.

AFTER this there was a feast of the Jews, and JESUS went up to Jerusalem.

* See an admirable Sermon of Bishop Sherlock's on this subject.

Now

Now there is at Jerusalem, by the sheep-market, a pool, which is called, in the Hebrew tongue, Bethesda, having five porches.

In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water : whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatever disease he had.

And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he said unto him, Wilt thou be made whole ?

The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool : but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole : and took up his bed, and walked : and on the same day was the sabbath.

The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath-day ; it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.

He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk ?

And he that was healed wist not who it was : for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.

Afterwards Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto

unto him, Behold, thou art made whole : sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole.

And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath-day.

But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also, that God was his Father, making himself equal God.

Then answered Jesus, and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do : for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth : and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

For as the Father raised up the dead, and quickened them ; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

For the Father judgeth no man ; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.

That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation : but is passed from death unto life.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and

and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God : and they that hear shall live.

For as the Father hath life in himself ; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself ;

And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

Marvel not at this : for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

And shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.

I can of my own self do nothing : as I hear, I judge : and my judgment is just ; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

If I bear witness of myself, the witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me, and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me, is true.

He sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man : but these things I say, that ye might be saved.

He was a burning and a shining light : and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

But I have greater witness than that of John : for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.

And the Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

And ye have not his word abiding in you : for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have

have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.

And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.

I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?

Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.

For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It appears that our SAVIOUR constantly attended at the Temple on the great festivals, and conformed in every particular to the *law of Moses*; not that he stood in need of *expiation* for *sin*, but it was required of him as the MESSIAH to fulfil the ceremonial law; and while the people were offering sacrifices for their own sins, the MESSIAH might, with great propriety, offer his for them: besides, the presence of the SON OF GOD in the Temple, supplied the place of the *Shekinah* or *Glory*, which was formerly displayed between the cherubims on the mercy-seat; and completed the prediction of the prophet, that God would make the glory of the second Temple greater than that of the first.

There is great obscurity in the passage relating to the pool of Bethesda, and learned authors are divided in
their

their opinions: it will therefore be to little purpose for us to attempt giving the exact meaning of this obscure passage; all we can be certain of is, that from whatever cause the water of this pool received its healing quality, only *one* person in a day could be cured by it.

The Jews took great offence at our LORD's curing the man, and then with authority commanding him "to take up his bed and walk;" because carrying a bed they regarded as a breach of the Sabbatic law, which forbade bearing burdens in the usual course of ordinary occupations on the Sabbath-day: but the man who had received the cure, thought himself justified, as he acted in obedience to his Deliverer, who he concluded must needs be a person of authority sufficient to justify his dispensing with a ceremonial precept.

The Jews appear to have accused our LORD to the Sanhedrim. His answer to those who persecuted him because he had cured a man on the Sabbath-day, and commanded him to carry his bed, intimated, that there is a perfect union betwixt God the Father and God the Son. The works of divine grace, providence, mercy, and justice, in short, whatever may be called peculiarly *the work of God*, is going on at *all times*; the DEITY has no need of Sabbaths for *rest* and *refreshment*; and were he to suspend his divine operations one day in seven, as men are required to suspend their worldly labours, his numerous creatures would perish. The works of the MESSIAH upon earth were of the same nature and tendency as those of the FATHER in heaven, and therefore equally suited to *all days*; but our LORD observed, that such works as curing an impotent man by a miracle, were small in comparison of others, which the SON in union with the FATHER was afterwards to perform, namely, *raising the dead,*

dead and quickening them, or giving them a principle of everlasting life. The work of *judging mankind* we find was committed to the SON, that he might be honoured as GOD; and, considering the union which subsists betwixt the FATHER and the SON, it is impossible to dishonour the SON without dishonouring the FATHER, for it is GOD that is dishonoured.

What our LORD asserted at this time, he certainly designed for the general instruction and comfort of the world; and he enforced it with those emphatical words which he always used when he taught what appeared to be new doctrine, *Verily, verily, I say unto you*: we should therefore pay the greatest attention to them, and consider the wonderful benefits annexed to that *faith* which leads us to acknowledge the *divinity* of CHRIST, and to pay him homage as the SON OF GOD; which are no less than redemption from sin and everlasting death, and a title to everlasting life.

With the same solemnity our LORD declared, that there will be a time for *judgment*, when he will raise all the dead by his own power; at which time retribution will be made according to the different actions of the good and bad part of mankind in this life. This power our LORD observed, he could not have had as a *man* without an union with GOD, for it is the exclusive privilege of GOD to judge his creatures; as the MESSIAH, therefore, he did not pretend to judge them according to the dictates of *human reason*, but according to the *will* of GOD. For the truth of his assertions, concerning his union with GOD, our LORD referred to the testimony of *John the Baptist*, who had declared him to be the SON OF GOD; but our LORD did not rest the truth of his words solely upon the evidence of any man whatever, he appealed to his *own works*; which works were at that time but be-

ginning; but which, when finished, would exhibit a complete body of evidence: and while our LORD was performing these works, the FATHER, though invisible, bore testimony that *the SON* was in union with Him; since no man could do those works which CHRIST did, unless GOD were with him. The Scriptures of the Old Testament also bore testimony to the same important truth; for the LORD, the SON OF GOD, who afterwards took human nature upon him, was evidently in union with the FATHER, and always appeared as GOD. It was *his* glorious form, not that of the FATHER, which was beheld by the patriarchs. Moses therefore, who wrote the history of the LORD's transactions with the people of Israel, and foretold the coming of such a Prophet and lawgiver as our LORD JESUS CHRIST professed to be, might be said to accuse the Jews of infidelity, when they refused to believe that the SON OF GOD was in union with the FATHER; because they refused to hearken to him who spoke the very words of GOD, and wrought miracles to prove that he was the MESSIAH foretold by Moses and the Prophets.

What effect this discourse had upon the council, and our LORD's persecutors, we are not told; but it is most likely that their malice was over-ruled by divine Providence; and that, being unable to refute him, they suffered him to depart, resolving to watch his words and actions for further cause of accusation against him.

From the explanation which our LORD vouchsafed to give to his persecutors, of the nature of his office, we learn, that it was such as no *creature* could execute, and that the great CREATOR took the MESSIAH into union with *himself*, and wrought by his hand, and spake by his mouth; not controuling his will, but perfectly instructing his mind in the *divine will*, to which his soul
paid

paid a ready obedience; and which he delighted to do, both for the love of God and the love of *man*, being by nature allied to both. We also learn, that eternal life is the gift of God through CHRIST, and that *faith* is necessary to salvation: that there certainly will be a general resurrection, and a general judgment, at which CHRIST will preside as judge: that he is to be honoured by men as the *Son of God*, the Son whom he loves, who has in himself a principle of eternal life, and the power of communicating it. For a confirmation of these divine truths, we are referred to the testimony of God himself, and to the writings of Moses. Let us, therefore, apply ourselves to a diligent study of the *Old Testament*, that we may the better comprehend the *New*. Let us receive the Gospel with humility of mind, and earnestly pray to our heavenly FATHER through CHRIST, for his grace to assist us in understanding whatever is necessary for our eternal salvation.

SECTION LVII.

JESUS DISCOURSES WITH THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES CONCERNING TRADITIONS.

From John, Chap. vii.—Mark, vii.—Matthew, xv.

AFTER these things, JESUS walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.

Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the Scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled (that is to say, with unwashed) hands, they found fault.

For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.

Then the Pharisees and Scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands ?

But he answered and said unto them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition ?

For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother : and, He that curseth father and mother, let him die the death.

But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me,

And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips ; but their heart is far from me.

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear and understand.

Not that which goeth into the mouth, defileth a man : but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

Then came his disciples and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying ?

But

But he answered and said, every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

Let them alone : they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.

And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding ? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth, goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught ?

But those things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and defile the man.

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

These are the things which defile a man : but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Scribes and Pharisees were extremely jealous of the success of our Lord's ministry, and, it seems, took a long journey expressly to watch his behaviour, for Jerusalem was eighty or a hundred miles from Galilee. The Mosaic law enjoined frequent washings, which were intended to intimate to the Jews the necessity of purity of heart : but the Pharisees made righteousness to consist in the act of washing, and carried the observance of this ceremony to a superstitious height, on the authority of their forefathers only, who had made great additions to the institutions of Moses : nay, they even neglected the observance of many precepts in the divine law, that they might conform to the traditions of their fathers.

Instead of being intimidated by their question, our LORD retorted their accusation, vindicating the honour of his Father, and clearly proving, that they themselves were transgressors against the law ; and as a proof of this charge, he observed, that God had commanded them to honour their father and mother, which implied that children should relieve the wants of their parents, and contribute as much as possible to their comfort and happiness ; whereas, their tradition was, that a man ought rather to give his superfluities to the service of the temple : so that, if a parent's necessities called for the assistance of his child, the latter might refuse it, provided he could urge in excuse, that what was required of him had been dedicated to religious uses.

Our LORD, to whom all hearts were open, knew that the great zeal the Pharisees pretended to have for the law of Moses was not sincere, but assumed, to obtain an influence over the consciences of men ; therefore, he openly accused them of hypocrisy, applying to them what Isaiah had addressed to the superstitious Jews of his generation. This part of our SAVIOUR's discourse appears to have passed with the Scribes and Pharisees in private ; but, as the substance of it was of importance for all persons to be acquainted with, he called the multitude to him, and told them, that their teachers gave them false doctrine.

His disciples having some apprehensions that the displeasure of the Pharisees might lead to disagreeable consequences, hinted their fears to their Master, who desired that they would not concern themselves about these men ; for since they were proud and wilfully ignorant, they deserved to be rooted out, and also their adherents. It seems, the disciples did not yet fully comprehend the spiritual nature of the divine law, in
respect

respect to defilement: JESUS, therefore, explained it to them by a familiar comparison, which they could not mistake; signifying that what we eat and drink is no part of the *body*, much less of the *soul*, and that *sin* is the only thing that can defile the *heart*. Those who under the Mosaic dispensation ate of such meats as were forbidden by the Law, were defiled and polluted in the sight of God; not indeed by the meats, but by the sin of disobedience, which had its place in the heart, before the forbidden food entered into the mouth, and remained there after it was digested and cast out of the body.

The custom of washing hands was no farther commendable than as it related to cleanliness, which could not require such frequent washings, neither could it be necessary to be continually washing their furniture and utensils; but this tradition was calculated to give the populace a high opinion of the holiness of the elders; for the rule was, that if they washed their hands well in the morning, it was sufficient for the whole day, provided they kept alone; but if they went into company they must wash their hands, to cleanse themselves from the pollution they were supposed to have contracted by touching others.

From our LORD's discourse, Christians are instructed not to place righteousness in the mere performance of religious ceremonies, nor in the injunctions and inventions of men, but in obedience to the commandments of God, and purity of heart. They also learn, that their heavenly Father requires them to shew their obedience to him, by a tender and affectionate care of their earthly parents, since no excuse will be sufficient for neglecting those to whom they are so greatly indebted.

We are in no danger of being deluded by the false

tenets of the Scribes and Pharisees: but there are men who call themselves Christians, pretending to be the true church, who greatly resemble them in many particulars; these are the *Roman Catholics*. If, therefore, we should be at any time exposed to their delusions, let us recollect this discourse of our LORD's, and resist the false arguments of those who teach for *doctrine the commandments of men*; making the word of GOD of no effect by their traditions, and assuming a power over the consciences of men.

SECTION LVIII.

JESUS CURES THE DAUGHTER OF A CANAANITISH WOMAN; ALSO ONE WHO WAS DEAF AND HAD AN IMPEDIMENT IN HIS SPEECH; WITH MANY OTHER MIRACLES.

From Mark, Chap. vii.—Matthew, xv.

AND from thence JESUS arose and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it; but he could not be hid.

For behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O LORD, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

(The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation) and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

But he answered not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us.

But

But he answered and said, I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Then came she and worshipped him, saying, LORD, help me.

But JESUS said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.

And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.

Then JESUS answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

And again, departing from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coast of Decapolis. And he went up into a mountain, and sat down there.

And they bring unto him one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech: and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue, and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;

And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

And great multitudes came unto him, having with
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them.

them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at JESUS's feet, and he healed them :

Insomuch that the multitude wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see : and they glorified the God of Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Our LORD did not immediately appear as a public teacher, when he arrived on the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, but retired to a private house. His reason for doing so probably was, that he might be sought by the Gentiles, as his fame had reached these parts ; and he could not long be concealed.

The poor woman who applied to him, being a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, had no share in the covenant-promise made to Abraham ; yet she had a true Faith, for she believed that CHRIST was able to effect what no one without *divine power* could perform. Our LORD seems to have at first disregarded her ; but it is plain, from his subsequent behaviour, that he approved her application, and intended to reward her, and delayed his kindness only to prove her faith, and instruct the Jews, that the Gentiles should be partakers with them of the benefit of his coming into the world. His answer, " Let the children first be filled," implied, that there was mercy in store for the Gentiles ; though, according to the plan of divine Providence, it was first to be offered to the Jews : the latter, proud of the distinction they enjoyed as the descendants of Abraham, regarded all other nations with contempt, and deemed them no better than *dogs* : it was in allusion to this pride, that our

LORD made use of that epithet; not that he so despised them; on the contrary, he willingly allowed the woman's humble plea, supported her faith by divine grace, whilst he appeared to deny her, and at length granted her request. There is no doubt but at her return, when she found her daughter recovered, she related the wonderful transaction, which might be a means of bringing many others to CHRIST.

Our LORD made no long stay in those coasts, but went again among the Jews. Soon after his arrival a poor object was brought to him, who was totally unfit for conversation, and consequently cut off from the benefit and pleasure of society; neither was he capable of hearing the word of GOD, nor of offering up the praises of his lips. In this deplorable condition his friends resolved to bring him to our SAVIOUR, who, perceiving their faith, and knowing also the real disposition of the man himself, graciously resolved to give him the relief he stood in need of. Our LORD generally performed his cures publicly; but for some reason, with which we are not acquainted, he took this man aside from the multitude. On this occasion our LORD made use of *signs* instead of words, as they were more intelligible to a man who was both deaf and dumb. By using his spittle our LORD intimated, that he was himself able to cure him; and by looking up to heaven he taught, that he should do it by a power from above; then reflecting on the various calamities of the human species, our benevolent SAVIOUR breathed a sigh of tender pity from his heart; and, that there might be one sufferer the less, he hastened to complete the cure, by speaking the word of GOD, "*Be thou opened.*" This miracle so exactly agreed with Isaiah's prophecy concerning the MESSIAH, that many of those who were in-

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formed

formed of this cure, applied the prophecy to Christ. Our Lord did not himself make an ostentatious display of his divine power; on the contrary, he performed the miracle privately, and enjoined his followers not to publish it; thus instructing them to do good without the desire of applause.

Though the particulars are not related, we may learn from the general account, that our Lord performed many astonishing miracles; even such as were maimed had those parts of their bodies restored which had been cut off, or otherwise destroyed. Thus did God vouchsafe to visit his people, and, through the MESSIAH, heal their infirmities and forgive their sins.

SECTION LIX.

THE MIRACLE OF FEEDING FOUR THOUSAND; DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE SIGN FROM HEAVEN.

From Matthew, Chap. xv, xvi.—Mark, viii.

THEN JESUS called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.

And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

And JESUS saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? and they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.

And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

And

And they did eat, and were filled : and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.

And they that did eat were four thousand men, besides women and children. And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting, desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.

He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red :

And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day : for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times ?

And he sighed deeply in the spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign ?

A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.

And he left them, and entering into the ship again, departed to the other side.

And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.

Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves because ye have brought no bread ?

Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up ?

Neither

Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees?

Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The multitude in general appear to have been properly affected with our SAVIOUR's miracles, and so desirous of his instructions, that they remained in the fields without rest, even after the food they had brought with them was exhausted. Our LORD knew that it would be more conducive to their salvation, if their faith and patience were exercised, and their minds supplied with spiritual food, before their bodies were refreshed by his miraculous power; he therefore suffered them to attend him for three days, till they stood in need of food; but whilst he thus tried them for the benefit of their souls, he regarded them with kindness and compassion, particularly noticing the time they spent in their attendance upon him, and the difficulties they submitted to; nor would he expose them to the fatigues of a journey till they had been fed by his bounty.

When our LORD was going to perform this miracle, he called his disciples to him to instruct them concerning the sentiments they ought to entertain; and likewise to prove, whether they kept in mind what he had said and done on a former similar occasion: had this been the case they would have applied to our LORD in favour of the multitude, instead of complaining of want of bread. They had at this time seven loaves, and the
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concourse of people was inferior in number to that which had been fed with five; but still by far too many to be satisfied with so small a stock of provisions in a natural way: therefore divine power was equally displayed in both cases. Our LORD had great reason to be offended at his disciples' distrust of him; but he knew the weakness of human nature, and allowed for its infirmities: however, he resolved to recall their faith and reliance on him, and also to exercise their benevolence, by requiring them to divide all the food they had amongst the people; this they appear to have done readily and cheerfully, as soon as he had made his will known: leaving an example to others not to be too anxiously solicitous for the morrow, but to feed the hungry, and depend upon divine Providence for themselves, whenever charity requires it. Not that Christians are enjoined to give all they have to others, without any regard to their own necessities; we must take a prudent and moderate care of ourselves, because we have no reason to expect miracles to be wrought in our behalf; yet we should always consider the wants of others: and, in cases of particular distress, deny ourselves a meal, rather than suffer the hungry, who have no other means of obtaining refreshment, to perish for the want of it.

It is observable, that our SAVIOUR, instead of praying to his Father to enable him to multiply the bread, *gave thanks* for a power already in his possession: he never even for an instant forgot that this power did not belong to his *human nature*, and his gratitude to God for the honourable distinction he had given him was ever awake. He was also thankful for the goodness of God in thus visiting mankind, and giving them, through him, not only bodily but spiritual food in due season.

When

When our LORD had fed the multitude, he sent them away, lest they should expect to be fed by daily miracles, instead of using industry for their own support; shewing by this, that he did not require the generality of mankind to forsake all and follow him; though, for a particular purpose, he demanded the constant attendance of his apostles,

Although the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* were at variance among themselves, yet they agreed in opposing our SAVIOUR's ministry; for he had equally condemned the pride, tyranny, and hypocrisy, of the former, and the infidelity and errors of the latter. Each party proposed ensnaring questions to him; but with divine wisdom he constantly gave such answers as defeated their perfidious intentions. A sign from heaven they insisted on, before they would give their assent to his doctrine. Would these obstinate infidels have made use of their reason, as they did in common matters, they must have discovered that every miracle wrought by our SAVIOUR was a sign from heaven; had they properly attended to his discourse, they would have known that his doctrine was from above. They had sagacity and skill enough to foretel, from the appearance of the sky, as our LORD observed, a change of weather; but in respect to the signs of the coming of the MESSIAH they were wilfully blind.

Though the sceptre was departed from Judah, and Daniel's seventy weeks were nearly completed, the Jewish teachers would not believe from our SAVIOUR's mouth that the kingdom of heaven was at hand; neither would they credit his assertion that he was the MESSIAH, notwithstanding the corroborating evidence of John the Baptist, and the writings of Moses and the Prophets. They were, therefore, unworthy of any farther sign; for which reason our LORD would not make
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a display of his boundless power for their gratification, but referred them to a future proof of his divine mission, purposely expressing himself in so obscure a manner, that they in their unconverted state could not comprehend his meaning. He called them an adulterous generation; because, like a woman who breaks her marriage-vow, by forsaking her husband, to live with another man, they had broken their covenant with God, by rejecting their Prophet, *in whose mouth the Lord had* (according to the covenant on his part) *put his words.*

On this occasion our LORD gave a remarkable proof of his benevolence. Instead of indulging anger and resentment for the personal abuse of the Jews, he contented himself with vindicating the honour of his FATHER, by withholding divine grace from those who were unworthy of it; but he could not thus execute the *divine will* without a sigh, being grieved to find his preaching and miracles had no influence on them.

Our LORD had another trial of his patience, in the stupidity of his disciples. As they had been witnesses of the discourse which passed between him and the Pharisees and Sadducees, he cautioned them not to suffer their minds to be corrupted by their false doctrine, which he compared to *leaven*; because, like that, it spread and fermented wherever it came. Notwithstanding it was so customary for our SAVIOUR to speak of spiritual things under similitudes, his disciples did not discern his meaning, but supposed that he upbraided them for their forgetfulness of taking the usual supply of provisions, which, when they recollected, they began to be apprehensive they should be distressed for food. Our LORD was justly displeased at their distrust of him after the late miracle; but only gave them a mild reproof, which brought them back to their duty, and at
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the same time furnished instruction for succeeding generations of Christians.

In every age, from the time of CHRIST even till now, false doctrines of one kind or other, have prevailed in the world. We have not, indeed, any sects under the denominations of *Sadducees* and *Pharisees*, but we have *Deists* and *Atheists*, who answer to the one, and *Papists*, who resemble the other. Let us, therefore, beware of the former, lest they teach us to doubt the truths of Christianity; and of the latter, lest they instruct us to corrupt them, by misinterpreting the Scriptures, and teaching for doctrine the traditions of men.

SECTION LX.

A BLIND MAN CURED; PETER PROFESSETH HIS FAITH; OUR LORD FORETELS THAT PETER WOULD PREACH THE GOSPEL WITH FIRMNESS.

From Mark, Chap. vii.—Matthew, xvi.

AND he cometh to Bethsaida, and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw aught.

And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees walking.

After that, he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

And

And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Cesarea Philippi : and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am ?

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am ? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the CHRIST, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church : and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.

Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was JESUS the CHRIST.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Our LORD's conduct, in respect to curing the blind man, was different from his usual method. It is supposed that he led him out of the city, because he would do no more mighty works there, on account of the unbelief of its inhabitants ; and that he performed the cure gradually, to awaken the faith of the man who did not come of his own accord, but was brought by his friends,

As every action of our LORD's contained spiritual instruction,

struction, we may suppose that he designed to intimate on this occasion, to those who are spiritually blind, that though at first their minds are dark and confused, they may hope to be gradually enlightened by his heavenly doctrine, if they will seek for a cure from the Gospel. By his forbidding the man to publish the miracle at Bethsaida, it appears that those who obstinately reject the *Gospel* shall be excluded from the means of salvation.

Cesarea Philippi was a city in the northern parts of Canaan, near *Mount Lebanon*, formerly called *Laish*. This being a retired place, the multitude did not immediately discover our LORD's retreat, and he was left at leisure to hold a private conference with his disciples. He had no need to question them for his own information: but it was proper to examine the Apostles, in order to try their faith, and that their sentiments concerning him should be recorded for the instruction of others.

The multitude were, as we find, divided in their opinions: but his disciples in general understood that he was the MESSIAH, yet it was necessary that they should acknowledge his *divinity*. SIMON PETER, ever ready to shew his zeal and affection, replied, in the name of all the rest, *Thou art CHRIST, the Son of the living God*; which implied, that he was convinced of the truth of what our LORD had formerly taught, concerning his union with the FATHER. In order to confirm this faith, our LORD pronounced him blessed; assuring him that no man, by mere *human reason*, could have discovered that he was not only the CHRIST, or anointed one, but also the *Son of God*. *Peter*, therefore, must have paid proper attention to our LORD's doctrine, and the proofs he gave of his divine mission; for it does not appear that he had any particular revelation made to him

him from God, but what he received from CHRIST himself.

As *Peter** was the first apostle that was called to the ministry, and also the first to confess the *divinity* of CHRIST, he was the properest person to begin the conversion of the Jews and Gentiles, in order to make a congregation of Christians; and our LORD called him a *rock*, in allusion to the name he had given him when he first became his follower, expressive of his character. To encourage *Peter* to exert his natural intrepidity in the propagation of the *Gospel*, our LORD assured him, that the church, which he *himself* should build, should remain to the end of the world, in spite of all the opposition that would be made to it by the powers of darkness, who would stir up the wicked to attempt its overthrow. He likewise promised, that "he would give to *Peter* the keys of the kingdom of heaven, &c." by which is meant, that he should have the privilege of *opening* and *shutting*; or, in other words, of *admitting*, or *refusing to admit*, men, as they were qualified, or not qualified, to be members of the kingdom of CHRIST here, in order to their future admission into the divine presence hereafter. This power is explained by the words which immediately follow, *whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven*. Or, heaven shall be opened to all whom you admit as members of the kingdom of heaven on earth; and the condition promised to all who are received, shall be confirmed and established above. This condition is the remission of sins committed before the time of conversion to Christianity, promised by CHRIST to all who should acknowledge him for their LORD, and yield obedience to his com-

* See a Sermon by Dr. Gregory Sharp.

mands. Our SAVIOUR afterwards gave the same power of remitting sins to the other Apostles ; yet the Roman Catholics lay hold of this text to maintain the Pope's supremacy. They pretend, that the particular church which Peter established was to remain to the end of the world, and that his successors were to have the supreme command over all societies of Christians, wheresoever dispersed ; that he fixed this church at Rome, where it has, they say, continued ever since. But we will not spend time in confuting such absurd doctrine, as it is to be hoped those who have the Scriptures open to them will not be drawn into a communion so opposite to the spirit of true Christianity.

We will at present recall our attention to *Peter's* confession of faith, which received the public approbation of our LORD : from whence we learn, that the acknowledging of CHRIST as the *Son of God*, is a necessary article of belief to all Christians. Let us, therefore, cherish the same opinion of our blessed LORD as *Peter* did, and honour him accordingly.

Our SAVIOUR, having confirmed his Apostles in the *truth*, commanded them not to publish to the world that he was the MESSIAH ; because he knew that it would be represented by the Jews to the Romans, as a claim to the sovereignty of Judea, and as inconsistent with the rights of Caesar.

SECTION LXI.

JESUS BEGINS TO FORETELL HIS SUFFERINGS.

From Matthew, Chap. xvi.—Mark, viii.

FROM that time forth began JESUS to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer
many

many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, LORD: this shall not be unto thee.

But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

And when he had called the people unto him, with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels: and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.

Verily, I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Our SAVIOUR instructed his disciples by degrees. First he taught them, that he was the MESSIAH foretold
by

by the Prophets ; next that he was the *Son of God* ; he then informed them plainly of his approaching sufferings, of which he had formerly giving only some obscure hints. Our LORD mentioned the very place where he should suffer, and the persons by whom he should suffer ; also the happy issue of his sufferings ; that, notwithstanding his human nature should submit to the malice of the chief priests and elders, he should rise from the dead, and triumph over his enemies. Our LORD foretold his sufferings, as a proof that he knew all future events, and that he *voluntarily* undertook what divine justice required for the salvation of mankind ; also to rectify the mistakes of such as should expect him, as the MESSIAH, to endeavour to obtain authority and dignity in the world like earthly princes ; and to shew, that the chief priests and elders, who ought, from their situation, to have been the chief supporters of the MESSIAH's kingdom, would be the greatest enemies to it.

The zealous disposition of Peter sometimes betrayed him into error ; this was the case in the present instance ; for he presumed to rebuke his Master, which occasioned our LORD to reprove him with unusual severity, as an adversary to his doctrine, acting the part of Satan, rather than that of a friend ; endeavouring to obstruct the great end of his coming into the world ; and losing his zeal for the divine glory, and the salvation of souls, in a mean solicitude for his temporal life, and the grandeur of an earthly kingdom. Our LORD then called the rest of his followers unto him, and informed them, that they must not expect any worldly advantage from adhering to him, but, on the contrary, resolve to submit willingly to whatsoever trials it should please God to expose them to for his sake ; declaring that those who, to

avoid persecution, should deny him, should lose their lives ; whilst those who patiently endured persecution, and resolved to part with life rather than deny him, should be preserved from death ; and, not only so, but the former would incur the penalty of *damnation* ; whilst the latter would secure *eternal life in heaven*.

The first professors of Christianity were exposed to the severest trials and sufferings ; but penetrated with gratitude for past favours, and animated with the delightful hope that they should be confessed by CHRIST in the presence of his FATHER and the *holy Angels*, at that awful day, when he should come in his glory to judge the world, they cheerfully sacrificed every other interest to the view of eternal felicity. Let us endeavour to imitate those true disciples as far as circumstances require, and stedfastly resolve to *honour* our blessed LORD, who was willing to do and suffer so much for our sakes, without any regard to the ridicule of wicked persons, whatever pretences they may make to superior learning and refinement.

In the last verse of this Section, our LORD is supposed to allude to the long life of St. John, who lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem.

SECTION LXII.

OUR LORD'S TRANSFIGURATION.

From Matthew, Chap. xvii.—Luke, xx.—Mark, ix.

AND after six days, JESUS taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, to pray.

And as he prayed he was transfigured before them,
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and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

But Peter, and they that were with him, were heavy with sleep; and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.

Then spake Peter, and said unto JESUS, LORD, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say, for they were sore afraid.

While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces, and were sore afraid.

And JESUS came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lift up their eyes, they saw no man, save JESUS only.

And as they came down from the mountain, JESUS charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead.

And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

And his disciples asked him saying, Why then say the Scribes, that Elias must first come?

And JESUS answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things:

But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they

they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed: likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them.

Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

* Our LORD having told his disciples that the Son of Man should shortly come in his kingdom, his transfiguration seems to have been intended as an earnest of that glory with which he was finally to appear.

Peter, James, and John, were the three disciples whom our LORD honoured with his particular intimacy; these he made witnesses of the most extraordinary circumstances that happened to him during his abode on earth, that they might produce them afterwards as testimonies of the truth of the Gospel; and, in the mean time, might not be discouraged by his deep debasement.

Peter, James, and John, were either wearied with the labours of the preceding day and intense devotion on the mountain, or their senses were miraculously overpowered, that they might not hear the whole of the discourse, which perhaps related to things not proper to be revealed to them at that early period; but the splendour which shone from our LORD soon awakened them, and they beheld with astonishment the wonderful alteration in his appearance, and the two men who were conversing with him, whom by their conversation, they found to be Moses and Elijah. Moses certainly was a very proper judge of this transfiguration, having so frequently beheld the *GLORY of the LORD*, that it was a familiar object to him: and the Jews had great respect for the memory of Elijah also, therefore they would not suppose

he would come to hold conference with an impostor, the proposal which Peter made to erect three tabernacles, seems to have been the effect of his great surprise, and was such a scheme as would have answered no purpose. The cloud which overshadowed them is supposed to have been like that which was always considered as a symbol of the DIVINE PRESENCE, designed, as we may conclude, to moderate the resplendent brightness of our SAVIOUR'S person, who dazzled their eyes like lightning. The terror which seized the disciples at the descent of this cloud was very natural; for it must have been extremely solemn to behold it, and still more so to hear the awful voice of GOD speaking from the midst of it. They now could have no doubts that JESUS was actually the Prophet whom Moses had foretold, since they had received the command of GOD himself to hearken to him, and must be fully convinced, that what our LORD had asserted concerning his being the *Son of GOD*, was true, since GOD had expressly confirmed it by this declaration.

When our LORD beheld his Apostles prostrate on the ground, overcome with fear and reverence, he kindly touched them, and with his gracious words inspired strength and fortitude into their minds. When they lifted up their eyes, they found that Moses and Elijah were gone: it is likely that these two glorified personages retired when the divine voice spake from the cloud, that the Apostles might make no mistake concerning the person who was acknowledged to be the *SON of GOD*. Our LORD commanded his Apostles to keep this matter secret till after he should be risen from the dead, lest it should be received as an idle dream, or incredible tale, invented by them to delude others. Though their divine Master had repeatedly told them he *should rise from the dead*, they could scarcely persuade themselves

themselves to take his words in a literal sense : however they resolved to be silent in respect to what they had seen and heard, and wait the event.

As the three Apostles had now no doubt of CHRIST's being the MESSIAH, they took this opportunity of making enquiry concerning a scruple which lay on their minds respecting Elijah ; wishing to know, whether the appearance of that Prophet, on the present occasion, fulfilled the prediction concerning his coming ? Our SAVIOUR informed them, that the Prophet who was to come in the spirit and power of Elijah, to prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of the MESSIAH, had already performed his office ; and the Jews, who pretended so eagerly to expect him, had treated him in the most arbitrary and cruel manner, without any regard to piety, justice, and humanity, and that in this manner would they act towards the *Son of Man*. The Apostles, from this explanation, clearly understood, that he spake to them of *John the Baptist* as the Elias who was to come.

From the appearance of Moses and Elijah on this solemn occasion, we may be certain that there is an intermediate state betwixt death and the day of judgment.

Let the history of this astonishing transaction make a lasting impression on our minds ; let us receive it as a testimony of our SAVIOUR's *divinity*, and as an earnest of his coming in glory at the end of the world. In the mean time, let us obey his laws, and pray for his grace, that we may be received amongst his faithful servants into the kingdom of heaven !

SECTION LXIII.

THE CURE OF THE DEMONIAK.

From Mark, Chap. ix.—Matthew, xvii.

AND when he came to his disciples, he saw a great
N 3 multitude

multitude about them, and the Scribes questioning with them.

And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him, saluted him. And he asked the Scribes, What question ye with them?

And one of the multitude, kneeling down, answered and said, I have brought unto thee my son who hath a dumb spirit.

And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away; and I spake to thy disciples, that they should cast him out, and they could not.

But if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

Then JESUS answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me.

And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming.

And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

JESUS said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

And straightway the father of the child cried out and said with tears, LORD, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

When JESUS saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him; and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, he is dead.

But

But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up, and he arose, and was cured from that very hour, and delivered him to his father.

And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out ?

And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief; for verily I say unto you, if ye have a faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Howbeit this kind goeth not out, but by prayer, and fasting.

And they departed thence and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Whether our SAVIOUR, like *Moses*, when he descended from the mount, retained any part of that lustre which had so lately adorned his person, is uncertain; but we may conjecture that this was the case, by the extraordinary respect paid to him on his appearance; he might dart forth a ray of glory, to serve as corroborating evidence whence the Apostles should produce their testimony concerning his transfiguration.

Whilst our LORD retired with *Peter*, *James*, and *John*, the rest of the Apostles waited for him in the valley, accompanied by a great multitude of people, among whom were, as usual, some of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, who seem to have watched him narrowly. Our LORD found his disciples engaged in a dispute with his malicious enemies, who had taken advantage of their Master's absence, to distress and perplex them. When he inquired into the cause of their contention, the *Scribes*, confounded by his sudden appearance, made

no reply; and his disciples, comforted with his presence remained silent, leaving the man who had occasioned it to explain the matter.

Nothing could be more distressing to a tender father than to behold his only child labouring under such a dreadful malady; but it appears that this man had not a proper idea of the *divine power* of CHRIST, neither had the Apostles such implicit faith in their LORD's *name* as they ought to have had. His reproof seems to have been addressed to all parties, but particularly to the Scribes and Pharisees. It certainly must have been a great trial to our LORD, to meet with such continual opposition, and he must naturally long for the completion of his ministry.

When the man brought his son to JESUS, the lad was immediately seized with astonishing agony, as if the *evil spirit* that possessed him was resolved to shew his defiance of CHRIST, by increasing his torments. The father, doubting in his mind whether our LORD could relieve his son, entreated him to try his utmost skill; but he was not yet in a disposition to receive mercy from GOD, *faith in the power of CHRIST* was necessary; our LORD, therefore, kindly told him, that the cure of his son depended greatly on himself: convinced by our SAVIOUR's discourse both of his power and his compassion, the man made an immediate profession of his faith, and earnestly implored *divine grace*; praying at once for pardon and strength, which were, through our blessed LORD's mediation, accorded to him, and he now confidently expected the cure of his son; which, that the mind of this afflicted father might be restored to tranquillity, our LORD instantly performed. The *evil spirit* was compelled to leave the body over which it had so long exercised cruel dominion, and was forbidden ever

to return. Exasperated at the triumph of our SAVIOUR, he resolved to destroy, if possible, the life of the youth, by the last effort of his malignant rage; but our LORD kindly defeated his intention, and with his own hand presented to the now happy father, the object of his tenderest affection, perfectly free from every ill effect of the violent agitations he had so lately endured.

Our LORD's reply to his disciples' enquiry, why they could not cast out the devil, intimated that a continual and increasing faith was requisite in those who had received commission from Him to do miracles in his name; and that, whenever their faith was firm and strong, they might expect the greatest miracles to attend their ministry in confirmation of the truth of the Gospel; but that, on the contrary, whenever they suffered their faith to waver, the miracle they desired would be withheld, because they did not themselves believe it would be wrought, though Christ had assured them that they might certainly expect the most astonishing effects from the use of his name on proper occasions. Our LORD's words, "*This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting,*" implied, that the Apostles were not to expect such great miracles as casting out devils to be performed, even *in his name*, unless they had recourse to fasting and prayer, as means of purity and holiness.

In these times, happily, we have no instances of possession, and consequently no opportunities of practising the preparation which is necessary to expel devils. Our *bodies* are now secure from the tormenting attacks of *evil spirits*; but human nature is subject to many diseases: whenever these afflict us, or our friends, the first means to be used should be earnest prayer to God; and as miracles have ceased, we may certainly have recourse to such remedies as providence has pointed out to man-

kind for the cure of different maladies ; but it will be in vain to rely wholly on these, since the SUPREME BEING alone has the power of life and death, sickness and health, which he dispenses to us through his beloved Son. The only *possession* we are at present in danger of, is that of *infidelity, vice, and immorality*, which can never hurt the mind, whilst *faith in CHRIST* has its due influence ; but should we, through inattention, suffer these to gain admittance, fasting and prayer will be the only means to recover divine grace.

SECTION LXIV.

OUR LORD PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE TEMPLE.

From Matthew, Chap. xvii.

AND while they abode in Galilee, JESUS said unto them, The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men.

And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again : and they were exceeding sorry.

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money, came to Peter, and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute ?

He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, JESUS prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon ? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute ? of their own children, or of strangers ?

Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. JESUS saith unto him, Then are the children free.

Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up ; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou

thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is probable that our SAVIOUR withdrew from the place where he had performed the extraordinary miracle mentioned in the last Section, to avoid the malice of the Scribes and Pharisees, as he knew that they were contriving mischief against him: besides, he seemed desirous of having some private conversation with all the Apostles together, that he might prepare them, as he had already prepared Peter, James, and John, for his sufferings: Those who were not present at his transfiguration, were, like their brethren, at a loss to comprehend what he meant by *rising again*; but their fears of giving him offence, by appearing to doubt his assertion, kept them from asking any questions on the subject.

It was customary for every man in the Jewish nation to pay an annual tribute to the Temple of two drachmas, amounting to fifteen pence, towards defraying the expences of public worship, which was called a ransom of the soul*. As both JESUS and PETER belonged to Capernaum, they were required to pay it there. Before Peter could mention to his LORD, that it had been demanded, and ask his directions concerning it, he replied to his *thoughts*, by a question which intimated, that, as the *Son of God*, no man had a right to demand tribute of him, for the sons even of earthly kings were exempted from the taxes which were levied on subjects: but as our LORD meant not to claim his title publicly at that time, and had no intention of disturbing the peace of the

* Exodus xxxi. 12, &c.

state, or of furnishing the Jews with any pretence to persecute him, he rather chose to submit to the payment, though he was obliged to work a miracle to procure the means, as he did not choose to go to the public purse for his own private use.

The coin found was called a *stater*, in value about three shillings. How great must have been our LORD's *knowledge*, to penetrate to the bottom of the sea! and how great his *power*, to direct the fish to Peter's hook, though he himself was at such a distance! It is most likely that the fish had accidentally swallowed the piece of money, which might fall into the water as he was aiming at other prey. No circumstance could have better answered the purposes of encouraging Peter in his dependance on divine Providence, and of shewing that all nature was at the command of the *Son of God*.

From our LORD's payment of the tribute, we are instructed to pay with cheerfulness the rates appointed for the support of public worship. From his desiring Peter to go and catch a fish, we learn, that in cases of necessity we must exercise our own industry, which is the best way of obtaining money, since God's blessing may be expected to reward it. If Peter had not found the money he wanted, in the mouth of the fish, the sale of it would have fetched him something, and by repeated labour he might have caught a sufficient number of fishes to produce the sum he wanted; but our Lord rewarded his faith by miraculous assistance.

It is evident that our LORD could easily have accumulated great riches from the bottom of the sea, but he chose to give his disciples a lesson of moderation.

SECTION LXV.

**JESUS DISCOURSES WITH HIS DISCIPLES CONCERNING
HUMILITY AND FORGIVENESS.**

From Matthew, Chap. xviii.—Mark, ix.

AT the same time came the disciples unto JESUS, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? and being in the house, he asked them, What it was that they disputed among themselves by the way?

But they held their peace: for by the way, they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest.

And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,

Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

Woe unto the world because of offences: for it must needs be that offences come: but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.

Where-

Wherefore, if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltiness, wherewith will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.

How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains and seeketh that which is gone astray?

And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Moreover,

Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone ; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother :

But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Again, if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church : but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven : and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.

Again, I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven,

For where are two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Our divine LORD, who was himself a perfect pattern of humility, took every occasion of inculcating this virtue in his followers ; his disciples had privately disputed among themselves which of them should be advanced to the highest dignity in the kingdom of the Messiah, which they expected to be a temporal one. To shew that he knew what had passed, though not personally present at the time, our LORD put a significant question to them ; and upon their not replying, he reproved their ambition, and instructed them, that the way for any one to obtain honourable distinction in the kingdom of heaven, is to be humble and condescending to his brethren, teachable and governable, like children of good dispositions ; and that his disciples might not suppose they would bring contempt upon themselves by this
humility,

humility, our LORD assured them he would espouse the cause of these little ones, and consider every act of kindness shewn to them as done to himself; and on the contrary would inflict dreadful judgments on whoever should purposely mislead, seduce, or persecute one of them. Our LORD intimated that as long as the world should last, his disciples would be liable to offences of one kind or other; but to deter them from committing such, he denounced woe to whoever should be guilty of them.

Our LORD then earnestly exhorted his disciples to avoid giving offence; and rather than indulge any sinful passion destructive of the soul, to part with their dearest interests with as much resolution as they would submit to the amputation of a mortified limb; observing, that they would not be the worse in heaven for any thing they should part with here, nor the better in hell for any thing they should unlawfully keep. Our LORD again renewed the subject of humility, and cautioned his disciples not to despise weak Christians, nor to think even children beneath their attention.

The words, *In heaven their Angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven*, may be understood to mean, that children and those who resemble them in that humility which our SAVIOUR recommended, being partakers of the redemption through CHRIST, will be among the blessed inhabitants of heaven. The parable of the lost sheep was designed to shew, that, it was not the will of the Father that any member of his Church should perish, who could by any means be reclaimed from error.

As it would be highly necessary that there should be some church discipline, our SAVIOUR promised, that the Apostles should have the power of ruling over it, and that he would confirm their decisions. Nay, for their further encouragement, our LORD assured them,
that

that authority and power should not only attend the actions of their united body in spiritual concerns, but wherever two of them should think proper to ask for divine illumination, or for a miracle to confirm their determinations, it should be immediately granted; for, though *invisible*, he should be essentially present to shew, by all proper interposition, the regard he had to their interest and prayers.

Since our divine LORD had so strongly recommended the virtue of humility, we should study to be perfect in it; for which purpose let us carefully practise the lessons he gave to his apostles. As children are so dear in the sight of their heavenly Father and his beloved Son, they ought to be instructed, by those who have the care of their education, to honour and obey God; for as it is not the will of God that one of these little ones should perish, whoever is negligent of their religious improvement will be answerable in a great measure for whatever impiety they may afterwards commit. What a strong incitement does our LORD's declaration afford for giving religious instruction to the children of the poor!

Our LORD's rules for the conduct of his apostles in respect to quarrels and contentions, are of general application, and will be found highly conducive to peace and reconciliation.

There is one part of this Section, relating to hell, which requires particular attention; namely, "*Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.*"

These are the words of our SAVIOUR himself, and they openly imply, that the punishment in hell will be *everlasting.*

everlasting, and that the fire is of such a nature as to preserve from corruption ; so that the wicked will be for ever *tormented*, but never *destroyed*. The expression “ Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt,” intimates that divine grace will purify and preserve from corruption every soul that devotes itself to God’s service. This salt is certainly good ; but whoever grows careless and inattentive to his duty will lose its savour. It should, therefore, be the earnest endeavour of every one to secure the inestimable blessing of divine grace, and one principal mean of doing so is to live in charity with our fellow-creatures.

One caution is particularly necessary in this age of speculative enquiry. Not to amuse our minds with curious questions concerning the *nature* and *duration* of hell torments, we should rather turn our thoughts to the means of avoiding them. That there is a place of dreadful punishment for the wicked, and that there is also a place of perfect happiness for the good, numberless texts of Scripture assure us. No circumstance affords more satisfaction in the contemplation of the latter, than the thoughts of its joys being *eternal* ; and on the other side, nothing is so likely to strike the wicked with awe, as the thoughts of *never-ending* torment. Let us, therefore, leave to others the investigation of points more *curious* than *useful*, and rest satisfied, that God will act towards all men with perfect equity, and impartial unerring judgment. Those who endeavour to do their duty, and who place their faith and trust in a crucified Redeemer, therefore, have no occasion to fear that they shall be doomed to everlasting misery, any more than those who are obedient to the laws of the government they live under in this world, have reason to dread that they shall suffer those punishments which are provided for delinquents.

SECTION LXVI.

CONTINUATION OF OUR LORD'S INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING FORGIVENESS—THE PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT.

From Matthew, Chap. xviii.—Mark, ix.

THEN came Peter to him, and said, LORD, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

JESUS saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, until seventy times seven.

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents.

But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had; and payment to be made.

The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

Then

Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me :

Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee ?

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him, because he followeth not us.

But Jesus said, Forbid him not : for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us, is on our part.

For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to CHRIST, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward*.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Peter, apprehending, perhaps, that our LORD's injunctions for the accommodation of differences might be abused by ill-disposed persons as an encouragement to offer injuries, and desirous to know how he himself ought to act towards those who offended him, put the question concerning forgiveness. Our LORD's reply taught him, that no man should set bounds to his clemency in this

* What was said by *John* concerning a person who was not a professed disciple casting out a devil, is inserted in the midst of our SAVIOUR's discourse on humility, which is in a former Section ; but as the explanation of it in that place would have broken the thread of our LORD's argument, it was reserved till now.

particular,

particular, since every human being stands in need of forgiveness from God for numberless offences, infinitely greater than any he can receive from his fellow-creatures.

The parable which our SAVIOUR made use of to enforce this precept, is so clear, that it were needless to attempt an illustration of it. It is however proper to observe, that the sum supposed to be owing to the king amounted to one million eight hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds; that by the servant to his fellow, only to three pounds two shillings and sixpence of our money.

This parable alludes to the debt of sins, which every human being contracts to a greater or less amount, by neglecting or refusing to obey the commands of God, to whom we owe perfect obedience. If the SUPREME BEING should proceed against us with the rigour of strict justice, we should be utterly lost, because we are incapable of making satisfaction even for our least offences; but God is graciously pleased, of his infinite mercy, through CHRIST, to accept our faith and repentance instead of payment, if we humble ourselves before him, and resolve to amend; and he will not only have patience with us, but will forgive us all that we have formerly done amiss. But if we are cruel and unforgiving to our fellow-creatures, we justly provoke the indignation of God. Let us then constantly bear in mind the infinite compassion of our heavenly FATHER towards us sinful creatures, and banish from our minds every sentiment of malice and revenge; since our own prayers for pardon will not find acceptance at the throne of grace, unless we, from our hearts, forgive those offences which our brethren have committed against us.

Whether *John*, from a consciousness that he deserved blame, wished to put an end to the subject, or thought the remarks he should make would lead to a farther illustration

illustration of it, is uncertain ; but we may understand, from our SAVIOUR'S answer, that he meant to recommend, by his own example, a spirit of candour and moderation ; and that it is best, in all doubtful cases, to treat those as friends who are not avowed and declared enemies ; as such forbearance may be a means of perfecting what is wanting to complete the faith and obedience of the person. These words of our LORD related principally to the times of the Apostles ; but all Christians may assure themselves, that the least of their services will be kindly remembered and abundantly rewarded by divine bounty and grace.

SECTION LXVII,

OUR LORD SENDS OUT THE SEVENTY DISCIPLES.

From Luke, Chap. x.

AFTER these things, the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city, and place, whither he himself would come.

Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few : pray ye therefore the LORD of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

Go your ways ; behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes : and salute no man by the way.

And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it : if not, it shall turn to you again.

And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such

such things as they give : for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you.

And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is nigh unto you.

But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,

Even the very dust of your city which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you : notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

Woe unto thee Chorazin ! woe unto thee, Bethsaida ! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.

And thou Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.

He that heareth you, heareth me ; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As, in the choice of twelve Apostles, our Lord appears to have had an eye to the twelve Patriarchs, and the twelve Princes of the tribes of Israel, so the appointment of seventy teachers seems to have had a reference to the seventy elders appointed to assist Moses ; the Jewish Sanhedrim also consisted of that number. These
seventy

seventy were chosen from among those disciples who did not devote themselves entirely to our LORD's service like the Apostles, but were the frequent hearers of his doctrine, and witnesses of his miracles. Though the Scribes and Pharisees opposed our LORD's ministry, and many persons were influenced by them, great numbers had been converted, who lived at very distant places; some of these could not follow him continually, on account of their occupations and connexions: he therefore kindly resolved to send them his instructions, for their further improvement in Christian knowledge, by these seventy; and afterwards to visit them himself, in order to confirm their faith before he left the world.

It is unnecessary to enlarge on our SAVIOUR's commission to the seventy: it is sufficient to say, that he gave them the same instructions and encouragement as he did to the twelve, to receive and return the kindness of those who welcomed them, and denounce the judgments of God against those who rejected their message.

Our LORD again denounced vows against Bethsaida, &c. But having already considered this denunciation in a former Section, it is needless to comment upon it here.

How frequently did our LORD repeat his invitation to sinners: He was constantly employed in promoting the glory of God and the good of mankind; thus instructing men, and particularly his ministers, to have a tender regard for the souls of others; and also teaching his followers to treat those with respect, whose office it is to explain to them the doctrines of his religion.

Every minister who faithfully discharges his duty, by teaching true doctrine, and setting a good example to his flock, may be considered as a representative of his LORD and MASTER, and should be honoured accordingly.

SECTION

SECTION LXVIII.

**JESUS GOETH TO THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES—
HE DISCOURSES WITH THE JEWS CONCERNING HIS
MISSION.**

From John, Chap. vii.

Now the Jews feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.

For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly : If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him.

Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come ; but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you : but it hateth me, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

Go ye up unto this feast : I go not up yet unto this feast, for my time is not yet fully come.

When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee. But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he ? And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him : for some said, He is a good man ; others said, Nay ; but he deceiveth the people.

Howbeit no man spake openly of him, for fear of the Jews. Now about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ?

Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

If any may will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?

The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil; who goeth about to kill thee?

JESUS answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.

Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision, (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers) and ye on the sabbath-day circumcise a man.

If a man on the sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath-day.

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he whom they seek to kill? But lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him: do the rulers know indeed that this is the very CHRIST?

Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when CHRIST cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.

Then cried JESUS in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am*: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.

But I know him, for I am from him, and he hath sent me.

* Commentators agree that this, in the original, is an interrogation, viz. *Do ye both know me, and whence I am?*

Then

Then they sought to take him; but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come:

And many of the people believed on him, and said, When CHRIST cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?

The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him: and the Pharisees and chief priests sent officers to take him.

Then said JESUS unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.

Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.

Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?

What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The feast of tabernacles was observed by the Jews with great solemnity and joy.

The kindred of Joseph and Mary, who are the persons here called our LORD's brethren, did not believe him to be the MESSIAH: therefore it was not out of kindness and respect, but from ill-will, that they advised him to go to Judea: knowing their hearts JESUS declined giving public testimony of his ministry at Jerusalem, and manifesting himself openly to all the world, because the time appointed by the FATHER for his doing so was not yet arrived, and it was proper for him to use every prudent means to avoid persecution; neither did he wish to provoke the Roman governor. As for those who are here called *his brethren*, it was of

little importance when they went to Jerusalem, neither had they reason to fear ill-treatment from the generality of mankind, or the rulers of the Jews in particular; because these all acted upon the same worldly principles. But our SAVIOUR's zeal for truth and reformation made all such persons his enemies; he therefore resolving to go privately to the feast, at the time he himself should judge most proper, waited a few days longer, and then went, but not attended by a train of followers, as usual.

From the enquiry which is said to have been made by the Jews, there appears to have been a general expectation of our LORD's coming to the feast, some wishing to see him through curiosity, others with the hope of receiving benefit, either from his doctrine or miraculous power; and the Scribes and Pharisees longing for an opportunity of persecuting him to his destruction. These different motives naturally gave rise to disputes, but they were cautiously conducted by those who thought favourably of our LORD, through fear of incurring the displeasure of the Jewish rulers.

When the general expectation of his coming had a little subsided, our LORD publicly entered into the temple, and taught with such divine eloquence, that the multitude who were assembled together were astonished, for they could not account for his possessing such deep knowledge in the Scriptures, nor for the gracefulness and propriety with which he communicated this knowledge to others. That they might no longer wonder at his abilities, our LORD publicly assured them, that what he taught was not the result of human study, but proceeded immediately from God; that it was not his as *man*, but as the MEDIATOR: and he declared, that God would afford inward conviction to every honest, candid, and religious mind, that the doctrine

trine of his *beloved* Son was divine. Our LORD then pointed out to his hearers the great difference there was betwixt himself, and a person who should seek to promote his own private interest, as he constantly referred the glory of all his miracles, as well as the wisdom which governed his words and actions, to the FATHER, which was a sure proof that he was no impostor. Our LORD then reminded them of the difference there was between himself and some of the Jewish teachers, who at the same time that they contended for the *divine original* of the Law, violated one of its greatest precepts, by their seeking to kill him, who was an innocent and upright person. The people who were not acquainted with the secret designs of some of his hearers, treated our LORD as if he were possessed with a devil, and unconscious of the words he uttered, when he talked of their *seeking to kill him*; but he, knowing that the *Scribes and Pharisees* would renew their persecution against him, on account of his having commanded the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda to carry his bed, addressed his answer to the *secret thoughts* which passed in their malicious minds, before they began openly to accuse him, and mildly expostulated on the inconsistency of their conduct, even upon their own principles: for if it was lawful to break the *sabbatic law*, in order to observe the *rite of circumcision*, surely it must be lawful for him to do a good work, which manifested forth the glory of God, and was perfectly agreeable to the laws of humanity. Our LORD, therefore, required them to judge of his actions as *reason* would direct, if they divested themselves of prejudice; for then they would be as ready to acknowledge his divine mission, as that of *Moses*.

Some of the congregation, who dwelt at Jerusalem, seem to have known that the members of the Sanhe-

drum sought for an opportunity of putting our LORD to death, and were surprised that they did not prohibit his preaching. It appeared to them, from this circumstance, as if the rulers were convinced that he was really the MESSIAH, and yet they observed it was very unlikely he should be so, because the prophets foretold that Christ should be born in a miraculous way at Bethlehem ; whereas JESUS came out of Galilee, and his parents were known. Whilst they were thus indulging themselves in idle surmises, and wilfully resolving not to believe the doctrine of CHRIST, he exalted his voice, that his words might be perfectly heard by them, and noticed by the rest of the people, declaring that their assertion, “ that *they both knew him, and whence he was,* was false, for that he came immediately from GOD, whom they knew not ; but that he knew GOD, having proceeded immediately from him, and being expressly sent by him.” The charge of not knowing GOD, provoked the Jews to such a degree, that they would have immediately seized him, and laid an accusation before the council, had not the power of our LORD overruled their malice.

This discourse, though rejected by the *proud*, found a passage to the hearts of the *humble*. Those who were desirous of doing the will of GOD, discerned by the right use of their reason, assisted by divine grace, that our LORD taught heavenly precepts. They were ready to acknowledge him as the MESSIAH ; and did not speak their sentiments so privately, but that some of a contrary opinion informed the Pharisees and other members of the Sanhedrim of their conversation, who sent some of their officers to apprehend him. JESUS, knowing their design, intimated that GOD would not permit them to put it in execution at present ; and informed them, that when he should return to GOD, he should

should be out of their reach ; neither would such malicious persons find admittance to the divine presence, and that they would then seek in vain for the MESSIAH. The Jews, not understanding his allusion, supposed that he meant to go and seek for the rest of Abraham's descendants, who were scattered among the Greeks and other nations ; or that he would endeavour to find reception for himself amongst the Gentiles. Not knowing how to judge, they were fearful of acting, and overawed by divine power, though they knew it not, they suffered him to depart without further molestation.

Every person, in the course of a religious life, must expect to meet with a variety of censures. Let a man be ever so good, some will speak ill of him : but it is a comfort for such to reflect, that his SAVIOUR bore the same treatment before him, by which means he set an example of the proper behaviour under such circumstances. Let us then learn of CHRIST patiently to endure injurious language, and endeavour to behave ourselves so, that we may have a testimony in our own conscience, and in the presence of God. Then will our names be had in remembrance, and the honour and reward of our faithful obedience continue, when the memory of those who reviled us has perished with them.

SECTION LXIX.

AN INVITATION FROM THE WORD OF THE LORD,
EXTRACTED FROM THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH.

From Isaiah, Chap. iv.

Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.

And he that hath no silver, come ye, buy, and eat !
Yea, come, buy ye without silver ; and without price,
wine and milk.

Wherefore do you weigh out your silver for that which is no bread? And your riches, for that which will not satisfy? Attend, and hearken unto me; and eat that which is truly good; and your soul shall feed itself with the richest delicacies.

Incline your ear and come unto me; attend, and your soul shall live: And I will make with you an everlasting covenant; and I will give you the gracious promises made to David, which never shall fail.

Behold, for a witness to the people I have given him; a leader and a lawgiver to the nations.

Behold, the nation, whom thou knowest not, thou shalt call; and the nation which knew not thee, shall run unto thee, for the sake of JEHOVAH thy God; and for the Holy One of Israel, for he hath glorified thee.

Seek ye JEHOVAH, while he may be found; call ye upon him, while he is near at hand.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto JEHOVAH; for he will receive him with compassion; and unto our God, for he aboundeth in forgiveness.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts; neither are your ways my ways, saith JEHOVAH.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth; so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Verily, like as the rain descendeth, and as the snow from the heavens, and thither it doth not return: but moisteneth the earth and maketh it generate, and put forth its increase, that it may give food to the sower, and bread to the eater.

So shall be the word which goeth forth from my mouth, it shall not return unto me fruitless; but it shall effect what I have willed; and make the purpose succeed, for which I have sent it.

Surely

Surely with joy shall ye go forth, and with peace shall ye be led onward : The mountains and the hills shall burst forth before you into song ; and all the trees of the forest shall clap their hands.

Instead of the thorny bushes shall grow up the fir-tree ; and instead of the bramble shall grow up the myrtle. And it shall be unto JEHOVAH for a memorial ; for a perpetual sign, which shall not be abolished.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Isaiah is generally called the evangelical Prophet, and the foregoing extract from his writings exactly accords both with the doctrine and style of the Gospels ; we will therefore endeavour, assisted by the knowledge already obtained from our LORD's discourses, to understand its import, which will help to illustrate the following part of his history.

The DIVINE WORD seems here (as on other occasions) to be anticipating the times of the Gospel. He first invites all, who should ardently desire happiness, to come unto him ; promising, that he would freely dispense it to every individual, even though they were totally destitute of the means to recompense him. He then intimates the superlative excellency of the gifts he should thus liberally bestow, being calculated to nourish the soul into everlasting life ; and, therefore, deserving of the most serious attention.

These blessings were to be expected, when the LORD should perform the gracious promises made to DAVID ; that is to say, when the MESSIAH should come, whom they were required to receive as a Leader and a Law-giver, not only to the Jews, but to all nations, who would run to him ; not because he was, as *man*, superior to the rest of human kind ; but for the sake of JEHOVAH, his God, who had resolved to glorify him, by taking

p 5

him

him in a mysterious and miraculous manner to *himself*, and to exalt him to reign over the kingdom of heaven.

The succeeding part of this prophecy so exactly agrees with our SAVIOUR's preaching, that surely no one can doubt but that the same DIVINE BEING dictated both. The conclusion consists of strong poetical images, expressing a great and happy change for the better, to be effected by the MESSIAH. The moral sense of the emblems made use of is, that instead of the *wicked* should arise the *just*, and instead of *sinner*s such as *fear to sin*.

Let us now proceed to the continuation of our SAVIOUR's history, which will afford a farther explanation of this passage of prophecy.

SECTION LXX.

OUR LORD'S PROCLAMATION ON THE LAST DAY OF THE FEAST.—THE REPORT OF THE OFFICER'S AND NICODEMUS'S INTERPOSITION.

From John, Chap. vii.

IN the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

(But this spake he of the spirit, which they that believe on him, should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified).

Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.

Others said, This is the CHRIST. But some said, Shall CHRIST come out of Galilee?

Hath not the scripture said, That CHRIST cometh out of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?

So

So there was a division among the people because of him.

And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him. Then came the officers to the chief priests and the Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?

The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?

Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them)

Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

And every man went unto his own house.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

On the last day of the Feast of tabernacles, which was a day of great rejoicing and festivity, it was customary for the priests to surround the altar with palm branches. Water was fetched from the brook of Siloam, some of which the people drank with loud acclamations of joy and thanksgiving, and some the priests poured on the altar. The particular meaning of this ceremony is not exactly known: some learned authors are of opinion, that it was instituted in commemoration of their forefathers being miraculously refreshed, when they thirsted in the wilderness; and some suppose, that it was meant as a way of invoking the DIVINE SPIRIT to be poured out on them. If the latter was the true interpretation, there was particular propriety

in our SAVIOUR's making use of this solemnity for inviting those who thirsted for spiritual refreshment to come unto him.

It is supposed that our LORD stood on an eminence, and proclaimed, with a loud voice, his gracious invitation. The words he used, evidently allude to the foregoing prophecy. Their spiritual meaning may be ascertained by comparing them with the conversation he held with the woman of Samaria; and we may consider our SAVIOUR on this occasion as publicly opening the *well of salvation*, inviting sinners to drink of it, and, with authority, promising to give to all who should have a true faith in him, such supplies of the HOLY SPIRIT as should not only refresh their own souls, but enable them to instruct and comfort others with heavenly doctrine. This part of our LORD's discourse, the Apostle tells us, related to the gift of the HOLY GHOST, which was to be granted in a visible and striking manner after his ascension.

We find that, even among those who were inclined to accept our LORD's invitation, there were great divisions; some believing him to be the MESSIAH, others the Prophet who was to be his forerunner; whilst some were restrained from knowing him as either, by the prejudice they had against Galilee, which they supposed to be the place of his nativity. It was generally believed that the MESSIAH was to be born at Bethlehem; but the Jewish people appear to have been acquainted with only a small part of the prophetic writings; for the Scribes and Pharisees neglected to study them, substituting traditional expositions in their stead. If they would have inquired of the Virgin Mary, or our LORD's Apostles, they might have known that he was born at Bethlehem; and, by examining the genealogies, they would have discovered that he sprang from David.

It appears from our LORD's own words, that the condition

tion of receiving the inestimable gift of the HOLY GHOST is *faith in CHRIST*. This faith, as was before shewn, consists, in believing him to be the MESSIAH and the SON of GOD, or GOD by his DIVINE WORD, *manifested in the flesh*. The prophecy in the last Section was, doubtless, like other divine revelations, uttered by the prophet, in consequence of the WORD of the LORD coming to him. The DIVINE BEING did not make *transient visits* to the MESSIAH, but *constantly abode* with him : and who can doubt that this was the case, when they find our LORD adopting the very expressions made use of by the WORD of the LORD, who came to the Prophets, and repeating in his own name, the promises which the LORD had before made? Let us then receive our SAVIOUR's repeated declaration, that the LORD, *in him*, actually visited and dwelt with his people, as a true and undeniable *testimony* of the performance of the divine promises; and let us *follow* him as our *Leader*, and *obey* him as our *Lawgiver*. There is, to be sure, great mystery in this doctrine; but what finite mind can penetrate into the councils of eternal wisdom? As the LORD's ways are higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts, we should set bounds to our curiosity, and contemplate them with an humble sense of his *greatness*, and our own *littleness*.

If we carefully consult the Prophecies, and compare them with the Gospel, we may obtain satisfactory proof that the GODHEAD *dwelt in him*. Let us, therefore, endeavour to purchase, with *faith*, the inestimable treasures of *divine grace*, which no earthly riches can procure; and incline our ear to our GOD and SAVIOUR, that our souls may live. Let us seek JEHOVAH while he is to be found, and call upon him while he is near at hand. If we will not acknowledge him *in the MESSIAH*, he will hide himself from us; and without the mediation,

tion of CHRIST, we shall never gain admittance to his glorious presence.

And since it appears, that by not understanding the writings of the *Old Testament* we lose a principal part of the testimony for the truth of our SAVIOUR's divine mission; and are exposed to a variety of delusions, let us study, though we are not *Jews*, the *Law* and the *Prophets*; which contain such exact descriptions of many circumstances recorded of our SAVIOUR in the *New Testament*, as will greatly tend to confirm our faith in him as the Redeemer of the world. And let us without being biassed either by former prejudices, or the insinuations of others (be their rank in life or reputation for knowledge ever so great) take a candid examination of our LORD's doctrine, and we shall soon perceive its divine origin. Then shall we understand how to esteem this gracious proclamation of his, in which we ourselves are interested, for *JESUS is glorified*, and the *Gentiles* are received into his church.

SECTION LXXI.

THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY.—JESUS DISCOURSES CONCERNING HIS BEING THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

From John, Chap. viii.

JESUS went unto the mount of Olives;

And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him, and he sat down and taught them.

And the Scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

Now

Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned ; but what sayest thou ?

This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But JESUS stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

So when they continued asking him, he lift up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even to the last : and JESUS was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

When JESUS had lift up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers ? hath no man condemned thee ?

She said, No man, LORD. And JESUS said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee : go, and sin no more.

Then spake JESUS again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world : he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself : thy record is not true.

JESUS answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true : for I know whence I came, and whither I go ; but ye cannot tell whence I came, and whither I go.

Ye judge after the flesh, I judge no man :

And yet if I judge, my judgment is true : for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.

I am

I am one that bear witness of myself; and the Father that sent me, beareth witness of me.

Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? JESUS answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

These words spake JESUS in the treasury as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him, for his hour was not yet come.

Then said JESUS again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.

And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath, I am from above: ye are of this world, I am not of this world.

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And JESUS saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.

I have many things to say, and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true: and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.

They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.

Then said JESUS unto them, When ye have lift up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself: but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

And he that sent me, is with me: the Father hath not left me alone: for I do always those things that please him.

ANNO-

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Notwithstanding the conspiracy which our LORD knew was formed against him, he sat down and taught in the Temple with authority ; but was soon interrupted by his constant enemies the Scribes and Pharisees, who would neither hear him themselves, nor suffer others to do so.

The woman they brought to him had been guilty of a crime for which the Jewish law condemned persons to be stoned ; and as the court before which she was to be tried, was not yet assembled, they resolved to see how our LORD would proceed in such a case, as he professed to supersede some of the precepts of the Mosaic law, or to give them a new interpretation : and they knew, that which way soever he might determine, they should have a pretence for accusing him, either to the Romans, for pronouncing sentence of death against her without authority from them : or to the Sanhedrim, for a contempt of the law of Moses. Our LORD, to disappoint their malice, appeared at first inattentive to their question ; but on their continuing importunate, he gave that admirable answer by which he avoided the snare they had laid for him. He tacitly acknowledged that the offender deserved to be prosecuted, but appealed to their consciences whether they, according to the rules of morality, were fit to be her prosecutors ; referring also to the law of Moses *, which enjoined, that the execution, in such cases, should be begun by the witnesses. To shew that he was not fearful of the resentment of the Pharisees, our LORD again wrote on the ground. It is in vain to conjecture what he wrote, neither is it material for us to know ; but it was to his enemies like the hand-writing on the wall, which occasioned such consternation in the palace of Belshazzar †,

* Deut. xii. 7.

† Dan. v. 9.

and they stole away with shame and confusion ; those whose age had furnished them with the most opportunities for the practice of wickedness, leading the way, and those who were just entering on the paths of vice, following them ; all ashamed to justify in themselves those actions which they were ready to condemn in others, yet too proud to repent and receive the Gospel. The woman remained alone in the midst of the crowd, determined to abide by the judgment of the LORD ; and struck, as it seems, with deep remorse for her crime, expecting with fear and trembling, that he would pronounce her condemnation ; but as her accusers were gone, CHRIST dismissed her also, because it did not belong to his office as MESSIAH to give sentence in judicial causes. His kingdom was not of this world ; he came to call sinners to repentance, that they might escape eternal death ; and in the present instance, though he did not condemn the woman to be stoned, he by no means encouraged her to repeat her crime ; on the contrary, he strictly enjoined her to reform her life, lest she should subject herself to a severer judgment from God than man could pronounce or inflict.

Our LORD, it seems, after the woman's departure, resumed his discourse to the people ; and borrowing an allusion from the mild rays of the morning sun which illuminated the temple, called himself the *Light of the world* ; and invited his hearers to quit the darkness of error and sin, and be guided by his doctrine to everlasting life. Notwithstanding those Scribes and Pharisees were gone who brought the woman, others still remained, who, enraged at the disappointment their brethren had met with, resolved to dispute with him, and attributed his assertion to vain-glory. JESUS then assured them, that his testimony concerning himself was certainly

tain true: that he was convinced of his union with God, and knew that, in respect to his *divine nature*, he came from heaven, and should return thither. As for themselves, he observed, they were very incompetent judges of him and his doctrine, being entirely ignorant of spiritual things; but the case was very different with the MESSIAH, who, were he inclined to judge in spiritual affairs, would never be liable to error, because God was constantly present in him, and every determination of his judgment, was regulated by the knowledge his soul received from the GODHEAD; yet he should not at present take upon himself the office of judge. If in the law of Moses two witnesses were sufficient to establish the credibility of any thing, surely our LORD said they ought to believe what was attested by him, since God had, by working miracles through him, borne testimony to the truth of his doctrine, and also by the prophecies which so particularly described him. In order to evade those powerful arguments, which they could not refute, the Pharisees called upon our LORD to produce his FATHER, to whose testimony he appealed, pretending to understand that he spake of an *earthly* father; his answer implied, that as they were wilfully blind, it was to no purpose to hold converse with them on divine subjects. It was plain, from their ignorance in not distinguishing the MESSIAH, that they understood not what God had already revealed concerning him, and that he alone could give them certain information in respect to the nature and will of God.

It is very evident that the Pharisees were restrained by divine power, or they certainly would have seized our LORD, for so openly accusing them of ignorance, and declaring that God was his FATHER. Our benevolent SAVIOUR, unwilling that even his enemies should
perish,

perish, warned them of his departure ; assuring them, it would be in vain to seek for the MESSIAH in this world, when He should be gone ; neither would those who rejected him here, be permitted to follow him to heaven.

Even this awful address they treated with derision, requiring to know who he was, that such regard was to be paid to him ; and that it should be so fatal to neglect him ? JESUS calmly answered, that he was what he styled himself in the beginning of his discourse, namely, *the light of the world**, what he declared himself to be in the beginning of his ministry, *the Son of God* ; *the Word of the Lord*, who had constantly spoken as GOD from the beginning of time ; the Seed of the Woman, the Mediator of the Covenant, and the FAITH of the Patriarchs.

Plain as his doctrine must appear to those who understood the Scriptures, the Pharisees comprehended it not. Our LORD then informed them, that at a future time, after his exaltation to heaven, they should be convinced that he was the MESSIAH ; and that merely as Man, he did nothing, for every word and action immediately proceeded from GOD : and to prevent their regarding him as sent by the DIVINE BEING ; as the Prophets of old frequently were, with messages which they did not understand, our LORD added, that GOD was constantly present in him, and would not leave him to the sole guidance of human reason, because he was obedient to his will.

Let us not, like the proud Scribes and Pharisees, refuse to come to the light. As there is but one sun to enlighten our eyes, so there is but one MESSIAH to enlighten our minds. Though our SAVIOUR is in heaven, he continues to transmit his light to us ; it shines in

* Henry's Annotations.

every page of the Gospel; from whence we may learn what the MESSIAH has done for us, and what he requires of us. Let us then consider the danger of dying in our sin; and, instead of raising objections against CHRIST and his GOSPEL, let us cheerfully receive the testimony which the FATHER has borne to him, that where our SAVIOUR is we may follow him. Though CHRIST has many things to say of us, and to judge concerning us, he will lay aside severe judgment, and yield to the dictates of mercy, if, in imitation of his blessed example, we strive to do always those things that are pleasing to our heavenly FATHER.

SECTION LXXII.

CONTINUATION OF CHRIST'S DISCOURSE WITH THE
JEWS IN THE TEMPLE CONCERNING HIS PRE-
EXISTENCE.

From John, Chap. viii.

As he spake these words, many believed on him.

Then said JESUS to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free.

They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

JESUS answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin.

And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

I know that ye are Abraham's seed: but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

I speak

. I speak that which I have seen with my Father : and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God : this did not Abraham.

Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication ; we have one Father, even God.

Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me : for I proceeded forth, and came from God ; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

Why do ye not understand my speech ? even because ye cannot hear my word.

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lust of your father ye will do : he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own : for he is a liar, and the father of it.

And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.

Which of you convinceth me of sin ? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me ? He that is of God, heareth God's words ; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil ?

Jesus answered, I have not a devil : but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.

And I seek not mine own glory : there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying he shall never see death.

Then

Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?

JESUS answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me, of whom ye say, that he is your God:

Yet ye have not known him, but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

JESUS said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM.

Then took they up stones to cast at him: but JESUS hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Although the Scribes and Pharisees refused to hear our LORD, his divine eloquence converted many; for there were still amongst the Jews numbers who were sensible of their deficiencies, and wished for salvation: to these GOD vouchsafed his grace, and they discerned and were ready to own the MESSIAH; who, even before their lips could profess their faith in him, acknowledged them as disciples, and carefully cherished the good disposition he perceived in their minds, by promising them, that they should have proofs of the truth of the Gospel,

Gospel, and ability to understand them, and that *the truth should make them free*. Which implied, that Christianity would clear their minds from those false prejudices to which they had hitherto been enslaved, and deliver them from the bondage of sin and the yoke of the ceremonial law. This expression gave great offence to some, who, forgetful of the Egyptian bondage, the Babylonian captivity, and their present subjection to the Romans, asserted, that the Jews had never been in bondage to any people. Instead of confuting this false assertion, our LORD, for the benefit of his true disciples, proceeded to explain his meaning; and solemnly declared, that all who committed sin were in a state of slavery; and far from having a right to be considered as the *children of God*, were at best but *servants*, and liable to be cast off; whereas the MESSIAH, being heir of God's family, had not only a perpetual establishment in it, but great power and authority: he, therefore, could deliver whom he pleased from the spiritual bondage of sin. Our LORD's words, *Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad*, intimated that Abraham had been favoured with a particular revelation concerning the MESSIAH, and greatly rejoiced at the prospect of God's mercy to mankind. Our LORD's declaration that he had existence before Abraham, was received as downright blasphemy, and the Jews would have put him to death if he had not made use of his miraculous power for the preservation of his life.

It has been repeatedly observed, that the WORD, which was united to human nature in the person of our SAVIOUR, was the same DIVINE BEING who appeared to the Patriarchs as THE LORD, and to Moses under the name of I AM*. There is no other being in the

* Exodus iii. 14.

universe besides God, to whom this title belongs : which implies *eternal existence*, not measured by *time*, but the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. JESUS, therefore, by appropriating to himself this appellation, proved that he was actually taken into union with God, who spake by him. Here, then, we plainly discover the great I AM, who delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage, coming in the MESSIAH to bring eternal salvation to all who would accept his gracious offer.

As we learn from this discourse of our blessed SAVIOUR, that continuing in the belief and practice of his divine doctrine, will entitle us to that glorious liberty which belongs to none but the children of God, let us strive to be his *disciples indeed* ; and not content ourselves with the outward profession of Christianity, nor submit to be slaves to sin and Satan, but yield our minds to the SON of GOD, rejoicing that we have found the great I AM, *before whom none was*, and *after whom none will exist*, even JEHOVAH ; besides whom there is no SAVIOUR, who declared his purpose, and made it known, who hath done, and who shall undo ? and let us remember that the doctrine of CHRIST is not of *human invention*, but proceeded immediately from GOD ; it therefore must be our indispensable duty to receive it, and if it does not bring forth good fruits in us, it must be our own fault : for our blessed LORD has fully instructed us both in relation to faith and practice, and in his own incomparable life has set us a perfect pattern of every virtue.



SECTION LXXIII.

THE SEVENTY DISCIPLES RETURN.—JESUS FORETELS THE GREAT SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL, AND PRAISES HIS HEAVENLY FATHER.—JESUS ANSWERS THE SCRIBE.—THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

From Luke, Chap. x.

AND the seventy returned again with joy, saying, LORD, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

And he said unto them, I beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven.

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you: but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

In that hour JESUS rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, LORD of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.

All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see.

For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

And

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ?

He said unto him, What is written in the law ? how readest thou ?

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind ; and thy neighbour as thyself.

And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right : this do, and thou shalt live.

But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour ?

And Jesus answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way : and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was : and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two-pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him : and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves ?

And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said JESUS unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

After the feast of Tabernacles, and before our SAVIOUR set out on his last circuit through Galilee, the seventy disciples are supposed to have returned, and informed him of their success with astonishment and joy. From their account we learn, that the power of CHRIST was present with them. Our LORD's expression, *I saw Satan falling from heaven*, is by some supposed to allude to the fall of the devil on his first transgression? others consider it as figuratively describing the rapid progress of the Gospel, which tended to establish a kingdom of righteousness destructive of Satan's kingdom in the world, by extirpating idolatry, and converting the nations to the worship of God. That his disciples might be encouraged to do their parts towards obtaining this conquest, our LORD endued them with a miraculous power of securely treading on serpents and scorpions, in token of their triumph over infernal spirits; but cautioned them not to rejoice in this power, on account of the honour it might procure them amongst men, but rather to rejoice, because they were, through faith, the children of God.

Our blessed LORD, on this occasion, offered up a solemn thanksgiving to the FATHER; the progress of the Gospel filled his benevolent soul with the highest delight; and being thoroughly convinced of God's justice in revealing the Gospel to the humble, rather than to those who were considered as the great and wise men of the earth, he expressed, *as man*, his perfect acquiescence in the divine will: then reflecting (as it seems) on the peculiar honours conferred on him as MESSIAH,

or the *anointed One*, he expressed his gratitude to the FATHER for the wonderful union with the DIVINE WORD, and the authority he had conferred on him in consequence of this union. Having addressed himself to the FATHER, our LORD turned to his disciples, and reminded them of their happiness in being instructed so particularly concerning spiritual things, which far exceeded that of the Patriarchs and Prophets, who had only faint shadows of them.

The person called a lawyer was one of the Scribes, whose profession it was to study the *Law of Moses*, and resolve curious questions concerning it: he came with a design of trying our LORD's skill. As JESUS knew his secret views, he referred him to the law itself; and informed him, that if he kept it *perfectly*, he certainly would be entitled to everlasting life. The Scribe apprehending, that our SAVIOUR would draw from him a confession that he had not kept the law, and infer from it, that he was under *condemnation*, and stood in need of *redemption*, endeavoured to justify himself, by insinuating that the *law* was not sufficiently explicit in respect to the extent of the precept of *loving our neighbour*, and desired our SAVIOUR's explanation of it. Our LORD well knew, that the Jews had, by their traditions, corrupted it, to the exclusion of all excepting their own nation; he therefore corrected this false notion, by a parable, which implied, that every human creature who stands in need of assistance is to be considered as our neighbour, let his nation or profession of faith be what they will.

Though they are not, like the seventy disciples, endued with the power of treading on serpents and scorpions; yet may the meanest Christian contribute to the propagation of the Gospel, and the extirpation of sin. The blessing of God will certainly attend their humble en-

deavours, and they will be esteemed, in his sight, as far preferable to those whom the world admires for their wit and learning. Let us therefore praise the LORD for his goodness, in thus revealing to the *meek* and *lowly*, what is hidden from those who are proud and vain of their own abilities and acquirements: and since this revelation is conveyed to us by the Son, let us honour him, and be thankful for the kind compassion he feels for those whom the worldly-minded despise. Let us reflect on the superior advantages we derive from the *New Testament*, and increase our diligence in the improvement of them, that our names may be written in heaven; and that our SAVIOUR, when we shall appear before him at his second coming, may rejoice over us.

Let us also study with attention, and imprint on our memory the excellent parable contained in this Section, that on all occasions we may have our minds prepared to shew mercy to our fellow-creatures. Barely to *read* of the benevolence of the good Samaritan makes one's heart glow with pleasure; but to *imitate* it will be productive of much greater delight. Let us then exclude from our minds every sentiment that may tend to make us unmindful of the distresses of mankind, and let us seek for opportunities of relieving them; then shall we follow the example of our SAVIOUR, and bear some resemblance to the SUPREME BEING in his darling attribute of MERCY.

SECTION LXXIV.

**JESUS VISITS HIS FRIENDS AT BETHANY, COMMENDS
MARY, AND REPROVES MARTHA.**

From Luke, Chap. x.

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, LORD, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

And Jesus answered, and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

But one thing is needful. And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is supposed that our LORD about this time quitted Jerusalem, and set out with his Apostles on his last journey to Galilee, and that in his way he stopt at Bethany, where he was received with cheerful hospitality, in a family with whom he had formed an intimate friendship. * "The two sisters expressed their respect in very different ways. Martha, intent upon her domestic affairs, seemed to think of nothing but how she might best express her regard by a liberal entertainment; Mary wholly attended to his instructions. Our LORD reproved Martha, because her civility was greater

• Dr. Stebbing's Sermons.

than her piety; and commended Mary, because, influenced by a more discreet and noble emulation, she had laid all business aside to make the utmost advantage of the favour vouchsafed for her spiritual improvement." The matter on which Martha was so intent, was a point of no estimation in the sight of our blessed SAVIOUR; he had no relish for luxurious feasts: his meat and drink was to do the will of the FATHER.

The practical instruction we may derive from our LORD's reproof of Martha and commendation of Mary is this: that *Religion* ought to be the principal object of our thoughts, to which all human affairs should be subservient; and that when any extraordinary occasion offers for our obtaining spiritual knowledge, we should entirely lay aside worldly cares, and improve the happy opportunity. We also learn, that festive entertainments are not worthy of our serious concern; therefore a Christian should neither be solicitous to provide, nor eager to partake of them. Let each then, like Mary, *choose the better part*, and attend to *Religion* in the first place, wasting none of those hours in convivial meetings that should be employed in devotional exercises, spiritual instruction, or the performance of moral duties.

We are not to understand from our LORD's reproof of Martha, that he meant absolutely to *forbid* what is usually called *hospitality*; on the contrary he encouraged innocent cheerfulness on proper occasions, by honouring festive entertainments with his presence: but it certainly should be a rule with all ranks of people not to *cumber themselves with much serving*, and to cover their board with such things only as they can procure, without inconvenience to themselves, or injury to others. People should keep a table suited to their rank and fortune. If they can afford delicacies, they may, in moderation, provide them; but with this restriction,

striction, that they do not hinder even the *domestic part* of their family from attending to the *one thing needful*, in order to prepare them. Persons of inferior stations, who have neither an income to afford splendid entertainments, nor servants to make the various dishes that compose them, certainly should not attempt to give them: for these cannot make a figure in this way without being *careful about many things*, to the danger of their religious improvement. In a word, it should be the endeavour of people to entertain their friends in such a manner, that all may eat their bread with joy, and drink their wine with a merry heart, from a consciousness that God approves their work, and will not suffer the good things they so infinitely prefer to the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, to be taken from them.

SECTION LXXV.

OUR LORD REPEATS HIS INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING PRAYER.—JESUS DINES AT THE HOUSE OF A PHARISEE.

From Luke; Chap. xi.

AND it came to pass, that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, LORD, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven so in earth.

Give us day by day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every,

one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves ;

For a friend of mine, in his journey, is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him :

And he from within shall answer, and say, Trouble me not ; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed ; I cannot rise and give thee.

I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend ; yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and ye shall find : knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

For every one that asketh, receiveth : and he that seeketh, findeth : and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone ? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent ? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion.

If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children : how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ?

And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him : and he went in and sat down to meat.

And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.

And the LORD said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter : but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

Ye

Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also ?

But rather give alms of such things as you have ; and behold, all things are clean unto you.

But wo unto you, Pharisees ; for ye tithe mint, and rue, and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment, and the love of God : these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Wo unto you, Pharisees ! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.

Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites : for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them, are not aware of them.

Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying, thou reproachest us also.

And he said, Wo unto you also, ye lawyers : for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

Wo unto you : for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.

Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers : for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.

Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute :

That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation ;

From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple ; verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.

Wo unto you, lawyers; for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered.

And as he said these things unto them, the Scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things,

Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

When our LORD left Bethany, he continued his journey, and divided his time, as usual, between the care of teaching his numerous disciples, and the exercises of private devotion. The disciples, who requested his instruction concerning prayer, were not yet (it seems) acquainted with the form he had taught, when he delivered his Sermon on the Mount*, and this might be the case with numbers besides; our LORD, therefore, graciously repeated it. It is needless to enter into a particular comment on this excellent Prayer again, as it has been so fully explained before; but we may observe, that our LORD's repetition of it proves, that he intended it for all his disciples; therefore every Christian should make use of it. Having taught them how to pray, our LORD encouraged them to earnestness in their devotions, by a familiar example, intimating, that God is more willing to help our necessities, than the nearest friend; and as ready to grant the assistance of His Holy Spirit to those who earnestly pray for it, as the tenderest father is to supply the wants of a beloved son.

Since our LORD has instructed us how to pray, and so earnestly enjoined us to practise the duty, we are inexcusable if we omit to offer up our daily petitions to

* See Sect. xliv.

God : nay, we deprive ourselves of the highest enjoyment the human soul is capable of, that of a spiritual intercourse with its CREATOR.

We have in this Section an account of a private conversation, which passed between our LORD and some of the Pharisees ; and we may observe, that our LORD's part in it was entirely consistent with the public sentiments he constantly expressed of that sect. In a former Section we read what our LORD said concerning their frequent superstitious washings, which the persons he was now with seem not to have known. It appears, that the Pharisees required CHRIST to conform to this custom ; but, instead of complying, he gave them a severe reproof for their hypocrisy and rapaciousness, and commended inward piety, charity, and liberality of mind, in preference to ceremonial observances, as more conducive to the sanctification of their meats, by answering a purpose agreeable to the commandment of God, who would accept what was given in *alms* as dedicated to HIMSELF, and bestow a blessing accordingly.

One of the doctors, or interpreters of the law, being present, observed, that in mentioning the Scribes, he had cast reproach on him and his brethren, to the disgrace of their holy profession. Our LORD, who could not, consistently with his character and office, palliate the matter, repeated his rebuke, and denounced divine vengeance against the interpreters of the law in particular ; on account of their exacting a rigorous observance, not only of the ceremonial law, but of human traditions ; while they, in their lives, contradicted many of their own precepts. Destroying the Prophets and other righteous men was a *national* crime, for which God had threatened to send vengeance on the Jewish nation ; but he deferred the execution of it till the measure of their iniquity

iniquity should be full. The Scribes and Pharisees, though they pretended to venerate the memory of those holy men, whom their forefathers had slain, adopted the spirit which had occasioned their death, and so made themselves partakers of the *national crime*, as much as if they had *themselves* killed Abel and Zacharias; and, by extending their malice to our LORD and his Apostles, they brought down the vengeance of GOD on their *own generation*; and might be said to be guilty of the blood of *all* the Prophets, because in opposition to the written word of GOD, and the preaching of our SAVIOUR himself, they justified all who had slain them, from the foundation of the world.

Our LORD accused these expounders of the *law*, of *taking away the key of knowledge*; by which is meant, that they had perverted the plain doctrine of Scripture, and by this means misled men who would otherwise have known their duty, and been ready and willing to perceive that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and that various prophecies were accomplished by the coming of the MESSIAH. And not only so, but they had intimidated many from embracing the offer of salvation, by threatening to cast them out of the synagogues.

As there was nothing in our LORD's discourse that would bear a criminal accusation, the Pharisees endeavoured to provoke him by dangerous questions to say something which they might produce against him; but he was superior to every snare, and, on all occasions, observed the exactest rules of prudence, so that no provocation or contradiction could excite intemperate anger or resentment in his mind.

Let us carefully consider our LORD's admonitions, which, though addressed to the Pharisees, are recorded for all whose circumstances they may happen to suit.

And

And let us remember, that hypocrisy and deceit are but for a short time, and that at the last day, men will appear as they really are, and be judged accordingly.

SECTION LXXVI.

OUR LORD'S DISCOURSE ON HYPOCRISY.—THE PARABLE OF THE WORLDLY-MINDED MAN.

From Luke, Chap. xii.

IN the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.

Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light: and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.

And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge, or a divider over you?

And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

And

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee : then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ?

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.

And Jesus said unto his disciples, Fear not, little flock : For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Sell that you have, and give alms : provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning ;

And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching : Verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

Be ye therefore ready also : for the Son of man cometh
eth

eth at an hour when ye think not. Then Peter said unto him, LORD, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all ?

And the LORD said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season ?

Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming ; and shall begin to beat the menservants, and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken ?

The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not for himself, neither did according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes.

But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required : and to whom men have committed much, of him they shall ask the more.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

There is no one sin against which our Saviour was so severe as that of hypocrisy ; and in this Section he shews the folly of it, by intimating that there will certainly come a time, when those who have been guilty of it will be exposed, in their real characters, before men and angels.

The

The man who applied to our LORD to settle a difference between himself and his brother concerning inheritance, did not consider the nature of his ministry, which related to the kingdom of heaven, not to the trifling concerns of this world. He did not come as a temporal prince to exercise a judicial power upon earth, or to alter established rules and customs relating to temporal concerns; but to teach mankind to wean their affections from things below, and set them upon learning things from above: therefore, instead of commanding the man to do as his brother required, our LORD began a discourse concerning covetousness, which would suit either one who unlawfully retained more than his right, or one who desired more than his lawful share; observing, that our happiness and comfort did not depend upon having great wealth: this he illustrated by a parable, the design of which was to shew the folly of those who are wholly intent on amassing riches, to the neglect of their spiritual concerns, and the misery of their latter end.

Few of our LORD's followers were in such affluent circumstances, as to have riches to set their hearts upon: their greatest danger was of having an immoderate solicitude about the necessary supplies of life: he, therefore, proceeded to caution them against this*, by repeating the instructions he had formerly delivered in his Sermon on the Mount; these have been already explained; but he added others, which require consideration.

Having assured his disciples that all things necessary should be given them, if they would lay aside anxious care and trust to Divine Providence our LORD added, that poor, weak, and mean as their condition, was God

* Luke, xii. 22, 32—compared with Matt. vi.

in his infinite mercy would admit them into his heavenly kingdom. Instead, therefore, of wishing to increase their worldly possessions, they might safely sell all they had, and distribute the produce of it in alms, rather than neglect their ministry to manage their temporal affairs. Their first and only concern ought to be to promote the glory of God, and the good of mankind, and to secure an eternal inheritance for themselves.

Our Lord's reply to Peter's question shews, that what he said concerning watchfulness, was intended for all Christians, as well as for the Apostles. What he added, seems to have been principally designed for ministers of the Gospel, and the first teachers in particular.

As a covetous desire of the enjoyments of this world is so apt to raise contentions, and engage men in pursuits that may prove fatal to their souls, let us accustom ourselves to reflect on the uncertainty of human possessions, and moderate our wishes by the rules of the Gospel. And since *a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth*, let us live like those who are in search of treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal, and where there is no danger of our souls being required of us.

Human life is very uncertain ; we should therefore follow our SAVIOUR's admonition, and keep in a state of constant watchfulness, dreading the loss of heavenly joys much more than any earthly disappointments. Though our LORD has left this world for a season, his commands remain in full force ; and he will certainly return and reckon with every servant according to his deeds. How soon he may summon each individual to leave the world, no one can foresee ; it is, therefore, very dangerous to defer doing our LORD's will to a future time.

Let

Let us, then, with all diligence, discharge the duties of our several callings, that we may, like good servants who have every thing in readiness for their master's reception, welcome our blessed REDEEMER with joy, and be received by him with approbation.

SECTION LXXVII.

OF THE GALILEANS WHOM PILATE SLEW.—THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD.—THE CURE OF AN INFIRM WOMAN.

From Luke, Chap. xiii.

THERE were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

And JESUS answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things ?

I tell you, Nay ; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem ?

I tell you, Nay : but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

He spake also this parable : A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none : cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground ?

And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it ; and

if

if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.

And when JESUS saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her; and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that JESUS had healed on the sabbath-day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day.

The LORD then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from his stall, and lead him away to watering?

And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day?

And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Galileans mentioned in this Section are supposed to have been the followers of Judas Gaulonites: he was the head of a sect who refused to submit to the Roman power, and asserted God to be their only sovereign; they accounted it unlawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, and would endure the severest tortures rather than give any man the title of *Lord*. These, it seems, Pilate had caused

caused to be slain when they came to worship in the temple at a public festival. Perhaps the Jews mentioned the Galileans to CHRIST, in order to hear whether he would justify them, and condemn the cruelty of the Roman governor. Instead of giving a direct answer, our LORD, with his usual wisdom and piety, made some useful reflections on the event, and mentioned another unhappy affair that had lately happened; telling them, that they would judge very rashly, if they supposed every one who was involved in temporal calamities to be a notorious sinner; instead of thus dealing out the judgments of God, it would be much better to reform their own hearts, as he assured them they were all deserving of divine vengeance, and would certainly feel the effects of it, if they continued in the same state of obduracy and impenitence. In order more effectually to awaken their attention, our LORD delivered the parable of the barren fig-tree, which agrees with the following passage of Isaiah's prophecy.

My beloved had a vineyard on a high and fruitful hill.

And he fenced it round, and he cleared it from the stones, and he planted it with the vine of Sorak; and he built a tower in the midst of it, and he hewed out also a lake therein, and he expected that it should bring forth grapes; but it brought forth poisonous berries.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and ye men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard.

What could have been done more to my vineyard, than I have done unto it? Why, when I expected that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth poisonous berries?

But come now, and I will make known unto you what I purpose to do to my vineyard: to remove its hedge, and

it

it shall be devoured ; to destroy its fence, and it shall be trodden down.

And I will make it a desolation : it shall not be pruned, neither shall it be digged ; but the briar and the thorn shall spring up in it ; and I will command the clouds, that they shed no rain upon it.

Verily the vineyard of JEHOVAH, God of hosts, is the house of Israel ; and the men of Judah the plant of his delight : and he looked for judgment, but behold tyranny ; and for righteousness, but behold the cry of the oppressed.*

This prophecy illustrates the parable ; the design of both was to intimate to the Jews, that, though they had hitherto been spared, yet if they continued unfruitful they should certainly be cut off. Our LORD farther hinted, that it was owing to his intercession that they had not been destroyed before. Both the parable and the prophecy are equally applicable to Christians. We have been planted into the vineyard of CHRIST, and cultivated by divine grace. Our LORD had spared us from year to year, though few of us have availed ourselves of his mercy, but we must not expect that he will spare us for ever : we ought, therefore, carefully to regulate our lives by the precepts of Christianity, and take advantage of the present opportunity. Perhaps we may now be in the last year, month, or even day of our probation ; let us then apply to ourselves our LORD's admonition to the Jews, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

The poor impotent woman had great piety, or in her unhappy condition she would not have attended public worship. Though it is said *that she had a spirit of in-*

* Bishop Lowth's Translation.

firmity, it does not appear that she was *possessed* by a devil, for our LORD would have noticed this circumstance : her mind seems to have been perfectly calm and serene, for she immediately on her recovery glorified God.

Some commentators suppose, that our LORD uttered at this time the parable of the grain of mustard-seed, and of the leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal. They are certainly very applicable to the occasion, and may be read here with advantage, for all which our LORD spake will bear repeated consideration *.

Whoever reads the history of our LORD, as recorded by the different Evangelists, will perceive that each of them sometimes gives an account of his delivering a parable, or discourse, similar to one that is recorded by another Evangelist as having passed on a different occasion. It is not improbable that our LORD, in giving general instructions, actually repeated the very same words ; for we must remember, that all he said was dictated by perfect wisdom ; and that these instructions, which to the hearers appeared to be nicely adapted to the present purpose, were not intended merely for them, but were designed for all persons in similar situations in every future age of the church, of the same dispositions and characters. By repeating his instructions therefore in the same words, with such variations only as the occasion might require, our LORD strongly enforced them ; and shewed, that they were capable of extensive application, and intended for all whose circumstances they might happen to suit.

* See Sect. xxiii.

SECTION LXXVIII.

**JESUS WARNS HIS HEARERS OF THE DIFFICULTY
AND IMPORTANCE OF ENTERING INTO THE KING-
DOM OF HEAVEN, &c.**

From Luke, Chap. xiii.

AND he went through the cities and villages, teach-
ing and journeying towards Jerusalem. Then said one
unto him, **LORD**, are there few that be saved ?

And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the
strait gate : for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter
in, and shall not be able.

When once the master of the house is risen up, and
hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without,
and to knock at the door, saying, **LORD**, **LORD**, open
unto us ; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know
you not whence you are :

Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk
in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence
you are ; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when
ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the
prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves
thrust out.

And they shall come from the east, and from the west,
and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit
down in the kingdom of God.

And behold, there are last which shall be first, and
there are first which shall be last.

The same day there came certain of the Pharisees,
saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence : for
Herod will kill thee.

And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

Nevertheless, I must walk to-day and to-morrow, and the day following : for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem,

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee : how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not !

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate : and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Our LORD is supposed to have been returning to Jerusalem, in order to be present at the Feast of the Dedication, attended by several of his disciples, when one of them proposed the question, LORD, *are there few that be saved ?* Instead of indulging their curious enquiries, he cautioned them to attend to their own salvation ; and by the comparison of a strait gate, intimated the danger and difficulty of a Christian life ; and informed them, that many who had believed in his name, and had desired to be considered as members of the kingdom of heaven, would be finally excluded, on account of their not having conformed their lives to his rules and precepts. This discourse of our LORD strongly inculcates that *faith* without *good works* is of no avail ; that divine grace will be withdrawn from those professed Christians who continue to live in a course of practical wickedness ; and that they will be condemned

to endless misery in a future state. By those *from the east and from the west, &c.* we may understand people of the Gentile nations. By *the last which should be first*, were meant some of those who should be converted at distant periods of time; and the *first that should be last*, signified some of the earliest converts among the Jews. The Pharisees told our LORD of Herod's designs against him, with a view to intimidate him; but having no cause to be alarmed for his safety from that wicked prince; he calmly desired those who gave him the information, to carry a contemptuous message to him, signifying, that he should still, in defiance of him, pursue his ministry for a short period of time, but should soon finish his course: in the mean while he should continue his progress without any fear of the effects of Herod's malice, as Jerusalem was the place appointed for his suffering death.

This discourse calls for our most serious consideration. It seems to have been intended to awaken the attention of careless Christians to the danger of their situation! Instead of being idle and remiss, let us therefore redouble our vigilance to obtain the high prize which is set before us, and we shall certainly be strengthened to perform the arduous task, for GOD will reject none but those who have despised or abused his mercy: and our SAVIOUR is ever ready to intercede for all his true disciples.

The Evangelist has inserted here a pathetic lamentation of our LORD's on the prospect of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem. He afterwards repeated it, and it will be commented on in another Section.

SECTION LXXIX.

OUR LORD CURES A MAN OF THE DROPSY AT THE HOUSE OF A PHARISEE, AND ADMONISHES THE JEWISH TEACHERS.—THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST.

From Luke, Chap. xiv.

AND it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath-day, that they watched him.

And behold there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.

And JESUS answering, spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day?

And they held their peace. And he took him and healed him, and let him go :

And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straitway pull him out on the sabbath-day? And they could not answer him again to these things.

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms : saying unto them,

When you are bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room ; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him ;

And he that bade thee and him, come and say to thee, Give this man place ; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room ; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher : then shalt thou

thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

For whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased ; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.

Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.

But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and blind :

And thou shalt be blessed : for they cannot recompense thee : for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

And when one of them that sat at meat with him, heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many : And sent his servant at supper-time, to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready.

And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it : I pray thee have me excused.

And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them : I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

And the servant said, lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

For I say unto you that none of these men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The poor man who was so dreadfully afflicted with the dropsy, had caused himself to be conveyed to the places where our LORD was. JESUS, knowing what passed in the minds of the Pharisees, answered the objections they were about to make, before they uttered them, and they were unable to reply; he therefore, before them all, exerted his miraculous power, and cured the man. Knowing that they were studying for objections against him, he proceeded as before to answer their *thoughts*, and confounded them still more: he then admonished them of a fault they were generally addicted to, that of being fond of precedency. One of the company attending with pleasure to this edifying discourse, and understanding, by our LORD's expression, *the resurrection of the just*, that he referred to the MESSIAH's kingdom, acknowledged, that to be admitted to feast there certainly would be higher recompence than to be invited to the table of the greatest man upon earth. This occasioned our LORD to speak a parable, which represents the grace and mercy of God in the Gospel dispensation, his invitation to the whole Jewish nation to partake of it, their backwardness to accept it, thus preferring temporal to spiritual concerns; God's just resentment for their ungrateful return to his goodness;
the

the exclusion of those to whom the Gospel was first preached ; and the calling of the Gentiles.

By this excellent parable we learn, what provision the LORD graciously made for the salvation of Jews and Gentiles, and that it is entirely their own fault if, after having had the Gospel made known to them, they do not obtain it. What our SAVIOUR at that time foretold has been accomplished ; and the Gentiles, who long lived in ignorance of the true GOD, have received the glorious light of the Gospel, whilst the Jews live in ignorance of their MESSIAH and his laws. But let us not be too secure ; though we have received the invitation, we shall be rejected also if we are indifferent to the blessings offered to us through CHRIST ; and if, instead of taking advantage of the glorious privilege we enjoy, by paying a willing attention to the duties of Christianity, we suffer trifling concerns to engross our time and thoughts.

This parable is usually applied to that holy feast, which our LORD has graciously provided upon earth for his faithful people, the SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER. How frequently do we see Christians absenting themselves from it, for the very reasons here given ; yet what can those expect who wilfully slight the invitation of their divine LORD, that they may attend to their temporal concerns, but that he will finally reject them, and exclude them from that feast of everlasting happiness, which he has prepared for them in the kingdom of heaven ? Why will any absent themselves through timidity and fear, when the Gospel invites *all* to partake of it, not only the rich and great, but the daily labourer, nay even the very objects of society ? Would all Christians duly consider the nature of the institution ; prepare their minds, as the last answer in our Church Catechism directs ; and devoutly partake of the bread

and wine, which represent the LORD's body and blood; they would infallibly experience an increase of comfort; they would learn to rejoice in their salvation; and would look forward with humble confidence to the resurrection of the just.

From the former part of our LORD's address to the Pharisees, we may learn that, even in respect to our worldly affairs, it is better to be humble and modest in our deportment, than haughty and arrogant; and that humility is highly pleasing in the sight of God. We may also learn that it is more consistent with the Christian character to feed the poor and indigent, than to make expensive ostentatious entertainments for people who would return the same, by which means much time and money would be wasted; and we may assure ourselves, for we have our LORD's authority for it, that in the exercise of charity we shall enjoy a much nobler satisfaction than the most luxurious banquet can afford; and the truly charitable will find a blessing attached to their good deeds which will follow them to the regions of eternity.

SECTION LXXX.

OUR LORD URGES THE NECESSITY OF CONSIDERING
THE DIFFICULTIES OF RELIGION BEFORE A PRO-
FESSION OF IT.

From John, Chap. xiv. xiii.

AND there went great multitudes with him; and he turned, and said unto them,

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

And

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

Lest haply after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

Or what king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?

It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dung-hill: but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It appears that great multitudes attended our Lord in his journey towards Jerusalem; and that observing their readiness to follow him, he exhorted them to learn what was required of disciples before they professed to be so. The beginning of this exhortation related chiefly to the first age of Christianity. Our Lord knew that his disciples would frequently be called upon to quit their dearest interests, to part with their nearest relations, and even to lay down their lives for the sake of the Gospel; he therefore admonished his hearers to

consider whether, if they took up the profession, they could resolve to persist in it, under all the discouragements of persecution, and warned them against apostasy; intimating, by the comparison of salt that had lost its savour, that a Christian destitute of integrity and piety will be rejected as an unprofitable servant.

SECTION LXXI

THE PARABLES OF THE LOST SHEEP, THE PIECE OF MONEY, AND THE PRODIGAL SON.

From Luke, Chap. xy.

THEN drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners, for to hear him.

And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders; rejoicing.

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost.

Likewise

Likewise I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.

And Jesus said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.

And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry.

For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

And he answering, said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment, and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

But as soon as this thy son was come, who hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Such was our SAVIOUR'S discourse as he passed from the house of the Pharisee with whom he dined; and, as the sabbath was a day of rest, the publicans, who were then at leisure, had an opportunity of attending him; encouraged by his condescension to sinners, they eagerly pressed to hear him.

The three parables in this Section were calculated to comfort those poor penitents who followed our LORD, and to rebuke the Pharisees for their pride and censoriousness.

ousness. By those of the *lost sheep*, and the *piece of money*, our LORD shewed the care which God in his infinite mercy takes to bring sinners to repentance, and the delight he has in their conversion; and in the parable of the *Prodigal Son*, God is represented as the Father of all mankind, shewing constant kindness to those who keep steadfastly to their obedience to his holy will and commandments, and receiving penitent sinners with paternal tenderness and affection.

In these similitudes our LORD spake after the manner of men. The Pharisees proudly supposed that they stood in no need of repentance, and that God was glorified upon earth by such righteous persons as themselves alone : our LORD shewed by these parables, that ~~in their unkindness~~ to sinners they were far from having a heavenly temper, since even the SUPREME BEING feels a tender commiseration for those who are likely to be lost, and good angels have a delight in administering to their conversion.

We must be careful not to infer from our LORD's words, *there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance*, that it is best to lead wicked lives, that we may by reformation be more acceptable to God than if we had never sinned; for as the man who lost the sheep, and the woman who lost the piece of money, had, we may suppose, an equal value for the remaining ones, so are all faithful servants highly esteemed in the sight of God: yet without any injury to them he may, through his divine goodness, rejoice that one who was in danger of eternal death is regained to their number: and, in humble imitation of the divine benevolence, every good Christian will rejoice also on so happy an occasion, as well as the blessed spirits above.

In

In what an admirable light does our blessed **Lord** appear, thus extending his compassion to those who were despised by all men ; and setting an example to his true disciples, to use their utmost endeavours for the reformation of those who live in error and sin, and gladly to receive them as Fellow Christians, when they discover signs of contrition and amendment ! If we are solicitous in respect to our worldly possessions, surely we ought to be much more so for the honour of God ; and we should strive not only to secure our own salvation, but also to promote, as much as possible, that of others.

The parable of the Prodigal Son had a particular reference to the Jews, not only in respect to the treatment given by the Scribes and Pharisees to the Publicans and Sinners who followed our **Lord**, but also to the offence they would afterwards take at the conversion of the Gentiles, and their admission into the Church of Christ. Our **Lord** addressed himself to the Scribes and Pharisees in such a manner as to avoid giving them offence, allowing to the Jews the privilege of *elder brethren* ; for though the Gentiles were favoured, the Jews were first chosen to be the peculiar people of God, and as such the Gospel was first preached to them before the Apostles were commissioned to invite the Gentiles to embrace it. The behaviour of the elder brother in the parable, was an exact representation of that of the Scribes and Pharisees in our Saviour's time, to Publicans and Sinners, and of the unconverted Jews afterwards towards Gentile converts. The *elder* brother boasted of his own virtue and obedience : the Jews gloried in their strict observance of the law. The *elder* brother complained of his father, as if he had been unkind to him : the Jews were offended that divine favour was extended to others besides themselves.

selves. The *elder* brother would not go into his father's house because the other son was admitted, and aggravated his faults: our Lord's reception of publicans and sinners was a pretence with the proud Pharisees for rejecting the Gospel; they judged those whom they called *Sinners* with rigid censure. Notwithstanding the peevishness of the *elder* son, his father treated him with affection and kindness; he besought him to come in; assured him, that the kind entertainment he gave to his younger brother was no reflection upon him, nor should be any prejudice to him; that, so far from rejecting, he should still consider him as his heir; but observed, that it was both natural and reasonable to rejoice on so happy an occasion.

From this explanation of the Parable of the Prodigal, we may comprehend the spiritual meaning of it, and how far it may be applied to sinners in general, and to the Gentiles in particular: but it will afford still farther instruction, if we suppose it to be a real story, as in this view it furnishes a lesson well adapted to the present times, so remarkable for extravagance and profusion *. Let us learn then from this example, "that prodigality sooner or later must end in beggary and ruin. Let our fortune be what it will, if we live above ourselves we shall at length be obliged to live below ourselves. It is the usual fate of the Prodigal, that his friends and his fortune forsake him together. Repentance is the final conclusion. But in temporal affairs, repentance is useless, it will not recover a lost estate, and every youth has not a kind father to receive him.

The use which the Prodigal made of the portion which his Father kindly gave him, shows how dangerous it is for youth to leave their best friends and advisers,

* See Bishop Newton's Dissertations.

and trust to their own weak judgment: too many there are who, careless of admonition and reproof, seek their own destruction, unmindful of the heart-breaking sorrow which imbitters the days of their tender parents, and robs them of repose. Such ungrateful children ought to be left to feel the want even of the common necessities of life, till their reformation begins to appear; and then the kind hand of parental affection should be stretched out for their relief, and they should not be suffered to perish, nor be driven to despair, but have all possible encouragement to return to the paths of virtue and religion; for the DIVINE BEING himself is ready to receive returning sinners.

Brothers and sisters may also learn from this excellent parable, to be kind and affectionate to each other: and to banish from their minds *selfishness, jealousy, and envy*, which are ever torments to the heart in which they are allowed to dwell.

SECTION LXXXII.

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD.

From Luke, Chap. xvi.

AND he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship: for thou mayest be no longer steward.

Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship; I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed.

I am

I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write four-score.

And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive ye into everlasting habitations.

He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much.

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

And

And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God.

The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The design of this parable was, to shew that the things of this world should be so employed by us as to promote our eternal interests. By the *children of this world*, our Lord evidently meant those people who attend only to their worldly concerns without any regard to a future life; by the *children of light*, those who, walking by the light of divine revelation, look forward with hope to an *eternal inheritance*.

The *children of this world*, says our SAVIOUR are in *their generation*, or according to their specific character, *wiser than the children of light*, for they *make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*; they employ the things of this world in such ways as are likely to secure the interests they have in view; but the *children of light* are too apt to be negligent and careless in respect to the use of temporal blessings. The unjust steward took advantage of his stewardship before he gave up his accounts, and engaged his lord's debtors to admit him into their houses, as one who had a title to their kindness, by which he secured himself from *labour and beggary*. And his lord, judging according to the principles of worldly-minded men, commended him because he had done wisely in respect to his worldly concerns.

Our

Our SAVIOUR admonishes *the children of light* to take the unjust steward for an example in respect to his *assiduity* and *forethought*, in providing for his future welfare ; but he tells them to *make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when these fail they may be received into everlasting habitations* : and that they may know how to do this, he adds that they are to act the part of faithful stewards in respect to the things of this world, intrusted to them by their heavenly LORD ; and to look beyond the grave for a recompence. Though our LORD addressed this parable, and the subsequent discourse to his disciples, he had certainly a view to the Pharisees, many of whom were rich and covetous ; such persons our LORD observed are not qualified to receive *spiritual blessings* ; because they do not *make a right use of temporal blessings* ; and they must not look for an *eternal reward*, unless they wean their affections from worldly things, and place them upon heavenly treasures. The Pharisees as usual, instead of receiving this exhortation with thankfulness, derided our LORD ; on which he reprovèd them for their hypocrisy, and told them they were no longer to look upon the Jewish nation as the only people of God, because from the time of John the Baptist's preaching the kingdom of God was offered to all mankind ; at the same time our LORD said the *moral law* would be enforced rather than destroyed.

From our LORD's own mouth we learn, that though *temporal things* are not to be trusted to for eternal happiness, they may be made subservient to it. By a proper application of riches, the favour of God may be obtained, and an entrance into everlasting habitations secured ; but this can never be done by such means as the *unjust steward* employed to make friends for himself ; therefore *the children of light* should never have
recourse

recourse to them, but, on the contrary, they should, according to their ability, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, comfort the sick, and relieve the prisoner, that at the last day they may partake of the gracious invitation of the heavenly king, *Come ye, blessed of my FATHER, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Let us, then, behave ourselves like faithful stewards, in the management of those good things which our heavenly Master has intrusted to us; and we shall be happy in the reflection, that in proportion to our fidelity will be our eternal felicity; for God has graciously connected our interest with our duty.

SECTION LXXXIII.

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

From Luke, Chap. xvi.

THERE was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.

And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores,

And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.

And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried.

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

And he cried, and said, Father Abraham have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

But

But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Having in the parable of the Prodigal Son described the grace of the GOSPEL, our LORD in that of the *rich man* and Lazarus set before his hearers the wrath to come.

“ The general design * of this parable is formed upon the doctrine of a future state, as it prevailed in the Jewish church at that time. It is addressed to the Pharisees, who believed the resurrection; and, therefore, our LORD did not on this occasion make use of arguments to prove the reality of a future state; but built upon it, as a truth believed and acknowledged by themselves.” As the Jews entertained very erroneous

* See Dr. Stebbing's Sermons.

notions on this head, we will not amuse ourselves with an examination of them; since we may be assured, that though our Lord here alluded to them, he did not mean to confirm them, but only to convey by this means practical instruction, adapted to the comprehension of those to whom it was addressed.

We may judge from the different portions allotted to the *rich* and the *poor man* in the other world, that they were of very different dispositions.

The *rich man* does not appear to have been deficient in charity, for *Lazarus* was fed with the superfluities of his table. It was no sin in him to wear purple and fine linen, nor to fare sumptuously; for he could well afford it; neither is it related, that he was guilty of fraud, oppression, or intemperance: yet we find he was, after death, condemned to a state of torment, whilst the *poor beggar* was exalted to heaven. (Abraham's bosom was an expression in use with the Jews, signifying the abode of happy spirits in a separate state.) From the request of the *rich man* that *Lazarus* might be sent to his brethren, and *Abraham's* answer, "remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things," we may infer, that his crimes were infidelity and unthankfulness to God for the blessings so bountifully bestowed on him. We may likewise infer, that *Lazarus* had borne the evils of adversity with patient resignation to the divine will, trusting in God's mercy for future happiness, and practising all the duties which belong to a state of poverty. When the *rich man* was convinced, by fatal experience, of the certainty of another world, he lamented his folly; but the day of grace was past, and repentance would not alter his condition: he therefore wished to inform his brethren of it, that they might be converted before it was too late.

"Who

"Who would not think, that the coming of one from the dead would effectually convince an unbeliever? For what more could any one desire, than to see an old acquaintance, and hear from him a relation of what he had heard and seen after death in another world? And yet this evidence, our SAVIOUR tells us, would have no efficacy on unbelievers. He who can hold out against the evidence GOD has already given, that he will one day judge the world in righteousness, would not be persuaded though one arose from the dead."

This parable, though in itself an allegory, will help to establish our belief of many important particulars. We may learn from it, that a man may enjoy a large share of temporal blessings, without possessing the favour of GOD. That there is a state of retribution, where the case will be very different. That it is impossible, for those who are condemned to the place prepared for the wicked, ever to go to heaven; and that there is no danger of those who have attained a state of bliss ever to be sent from it, and that it is better to prepare for eternity, than to enjoy all the riches, honours, and pleasures this world can afford.

Since we are furnished with the means of knowledge, we should take warning from the fate of the rich man in the parable. Those who will attend to Moses and the Prophets may be sufficiently convinced of the reality of a future state; but we have the additional testimony of CHRIST and his Apostles; and if these are not enough to establish our belief of the truth of Christianity, no evidence will convince us. Let us then be thankful for the light we have, which is amply sufficient to guide our feet into the way of peace; if we do not, at the peril of our immortal souls, wilfully ex-

clude it, and resolve rather to wander in the darkness of error and sin.

SECTION LXXIV.

THE PARABLES OF THE UNJUST JUDGE, AND THE
PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE.

From Luke, Chap. xvii, xviii.

AND the Apostles said unto the **LORD**, Increase our faith.

And the **LORD** said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it shall obey you.

But which of you having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go, and sit down to meat :

And will not rather say unto him, Make ready where-with I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me till I have eaten and drunken ; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink ?

Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him ? I trow not.

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants : we have done that which was our duty to do.

And he spake a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint ;

Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

And

And he would not for a while: but afterwards he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself. God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

And the publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Our Lord's discourse concerning the duty of a servant, was particularly addressed to his disciples, but

may be applied to Christians in general ; for we are all God's servants, and are bound to do what we can for his honour and glory. There is a variety of work appointed for us to do : we must therefore endeavour to discharge the duties which our heavenly Master requires of us, with diligence and integrity ; yet, after all, we must acknowledge ourselves to be unprofitable servants, because no advantage can arise to God from what we do : he has no need of us, nor can our best services add either to his perfection or happiness ; but what he requires of us is for our own benefit, and the good of our fellow-creatures.

The Parable of the *unjust judge* seems to have been principally designed as an encouragement to his disciples under the hardships they would meet with from the malice of their enemies ; that they might pray with faith and perseverance, and not faint under their trials ; but it is of general application. If a judge, who was an entire stranger to goodness, was at length overcome by importunity *, what may not be expected from a God who is infinite in goodness, ever bountiful to his creatures, delighting to do them good, even without their seeking or desiring it, and who is constantly able to supply all their wants ? Such a Being certainly will attend to the earnest prayers of his creatures, especially of those who, by their Christian profession, are become his *elect* or *chosen* people, and will grant them such supplies as they stand in need of. But then we must remember, that *men ought always to pray and not faint*. The meaning of which is, that we should be always in a disposition for praying ; that is, we should keep alive in our minds a firm belief of God and his Providence, a lively sense of our own sinfulness, and weakness, and

* See an excellent Sermon on this Subject by Archbishop Sharpe.

an humble dependence upon his goodness for the supply of our wants. It also imports, that we should, on all solemn occasions, actually address ourselves to God; seeking help from him in all difficulties; acknowledging every striking instance of his goodness; imploring his protection, his guidance, his blessing upon us, in every work of moment we go about. It also implies, that we should, at least *twice* in a day, either in public or private, offer up the sacrifice of prayer and praise in a solemn manner unto God, as other daily sacrifices are abolished. *To pray always and not faint*, imports also continuance and perseverance in prayer; not to pray by fits and starts, and then intermit our devotions, but constantly to keep up the fervour of our minds towards God, whether we have a return to our prayers immediately or not. Not that the Almighty has need of our remonstrances, or can be moved by our pleadings; but he has made it our duty, and it is inconsistent with his justice to grant mercy unless we ask for it.

Our SAVIOUR assured his disciples, that his FATHER would certainly vindicate their cause at length by the sudden destruction of their persecutors, if they continued to supplicate his aid; though he might, to exercise their patience, and give their enemies opportunity to repent, leave them exposed for a time to the malice of the Jews. The ALMIGHTY is not, like the *unjust judge*, backward to relieve, but constantly ready to bestow his mercies when we are properly disposed to receive them.

The expression, *When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith in the earth?* is by some understood to mean, that there would be none who professed the faith of CHRIST remaining in the land of Judea, when that terrible destruction he had foretold should fall upon it: others explain it as signifying, that the severity of the persecu-

tion would almost bear down the faith of God's people. By having Faith as a *grain of mustard seed*, signifies having an increasing Faith, producing an attention to the various duties of Christianity, as the small seed of the mustard-tree alluded to sprang up in the earth and produced branches and leaves.

It is easy to perceive, that the Parable of *the two men who went into the temple to pray*, was particularly designed to mortify the Pharisees, and encourage the Publicans, and those who were stigmatized as sinners by the Jews; but it will admit of general application.

The Pharisees imagined that they were as holy as they had need to be, and much more righteous than other men. Proud of their strict observance of the ceremonial law, they supposed that they had a right to claim God's peculiar favour as a debt due to them. But it is unnecessary to say any more of this self-justifying sect, as our Lord has so fully described them in the parable before us. The behaviour proper for a true penitent is also so well exemplified in the Publican, that it is superfluous to attempt a farther illustration of it. As we all stand in need of divine mercy, we should supplicate for it with the same humility as he did, and not trust in our own righteousness, like the proud Pharisee; for, in the sight of God, no man living is justified or reckoned just by his own works, since all have sinned and stand in need of forgiveness. How gracious then is the DIVINE BEING, to promise that he who humbleth himself shall, through his infinite mercy, be exalted?

SECTION LXXXV.

CHRIST REBUKES THE INTEMPERATE ZEAL OF JAMES AND JOHN, AND HEALS TEN LEPERS.—OUR LORD, WARNS THE PHARISES OF THE APPROACHING NATIONAL DESTRUCTION.

From Luke, Chap. ix. xvii.

AND it came to pass that as he went to Jerusalem, he passed through the midst of Samaria;

And sent messengers before his face : and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, LORD, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did ?

But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off : and they lifted up their voices, and said, JESUS, Master, have mercy upon us.

And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass that as they went they were cleansed.

And one of them when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks : and he was a Samaritan.

And JESUS answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

Neither shall they say, Lo here, or, lo there: for behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.

And they shall say to you, See here, or see there; go not after them, nor follow them.

For as the lightning that lightneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

And as it was in the days of NOAH, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that NOAH entered into the ark: and the flood came and destroyed them all.

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded:

But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all: Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

In that day, he which shall be upon the house top,
and

and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

Remember Lot's wife.

Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it.

I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed: the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.

Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

And they answered and said unto him, Where LORD? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though our LORD knew that he should, by his discourses and miracles, provoke the malice of the Jewish rulers, and at length suffer death at Jerusalem, he steadfastly determined to go thither; knowing, that it was the only way to promote the glory of God, and the salvation of mankind.

It was natural for James and John to be offended with the Samaritans, but they carried their zeal to an intemperate excess, and their divine MASTER reproved them for it, shewing them that it proceeded from an unchristian disposition: for Christianity forbids the indulgence of pride, passion, and personal revenge; and they should have considered, that the Gospel was a proclamation of *peace and good will to men*; and not to be propagated by fire and sword, blood and slaughter. Instead, therefore, of expressing resentment against

those Samaritans, our LORD quietly retired to another village; here he had an opportunity of exercising his benevolence on ten miserable objects at once; it is probable, he travelled that way in particular for their sakes. It must have been very affecting to hear these ten lepers, all with one voice calling on our LORD for mercy; and delightful to observe the benignity with which he granted it!

To try the obedience of these men, and also that their cure might be ascertained, and that they might be received into society again, our LORD sent them to the Priest. One of the lepers, particularly affected with the mercy bestowed on him, publicly acknowledged the Divine power of CHRIST, and glorified GOD; this man was a *Samaritan*, the other nine were Jews: our LORD mentioned this circumstance, as an argument for his kindness to the Samaritans, whom his countrymen despised.

We may learn from our LORD's rebuke to James and John, that it is the duty of every Christian, before he executes purposes of revenge, to consider *what kind of spirit is he of*, and to regulate his anger by the rules of the Gospel; and we are taught, by his benevolence to the *Samaritan* leper, to be kind to strangers, and not to contract our kindness to the circle of our own acquaintance, nor even of our own countrymen; for all mankind are the children of one FATHER, even GOD; and as we cannot, like our blessed LORD, penetrate into the hearts of men, and discern their dispositions, charity requires that we should think well of all, till we find, by experience, that they are undeserving of our good opinion; nor should we withhold our benevolence, even if we have occasion to change our sentiments, when an opportunity offers for promoting the eternal happiness of any of our fellow-creatures.

It

It is not certain whether our LORD was at Jerusalem, or in its neighbourhood, when the Pharisees asked him the question concerning the kingdom of God. In his answer he cautioned them not to expect it with external pomp and the observation of men, because it was a *spiritual* kingdom, and, during their abode in this world, to be only *spiritually* discerned. When our LORD was alone with his disciples, he described the signs by which they might know that this kingdom was actually begun; and warned them, that the establishing of it in the minds of men would be attended with great trouble and interruption to the first propagators of it, as well as to its opponents: so that all parties would wish for the coming of the MESSIAH; the Jews, in hopes that he would bring them victory and triumph; the Christians, that they might enjoy peace and tranquillity.

Lest his disciples should be deceived by false reports concerning the kingdom of heaven, our LORD cautioned them to beware of impostors; and told them, that He shortly *would* come, but in a very different manner from what the Jews expected, to bring sudden and unavoidable destruction on the enemies of his religion; but he foretold that he must suffer many things before what he now predicted should come to pass; yet Divine vengeance would overtake sinners, as it formerly had done in many very remarkable instances, when they least expected it. Our LORD then prophesied, that at the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, numbers of his faithful servants would be saved in a very providential manner, when others of the same family, who did not believe in him, would be destroyed with exemplary judgments, as Lot's wife had been for her infidelity; that wherever the unbelieving Jews should be gathered together, there would the vengeance

of God pursue them ; and that the Romans (called Eagles, perhaps, because they bore that bird on their standard) should fly upon them as a helpless prey.

We will reserve the full consideration of this remarkable prophecy to a future occasion. It will be sufficient for our present purpose to point out, that what our LORD said of the destruction of Jerusalem may be applied to his appearance at the *last day*. We should, therefore, always keep in mind, that *death* and *judgment* will come, and endeavour to be in a state of preparation for them ; and not, like Lot's wife, disbelieve the threatenings of God ; and, having entered on a religious course of life, look back with desire after the sinful pleasures of this world.

SECTION LXXXVI.

OUR LORD CURES A MAN WHO HAD BEEN BLIND
FROM HIS BIRTH.

From John, Chap. ix.

AND as Jesus passed by, he saw a man that was blind from his birth, and his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind ?

JESUS answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents :. but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day : the night cometh when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground,
and

and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay ;

And said unto him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him, that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged ?

Some said, This is he : others said, He is like him : but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened ?

He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash : and I went and washed, and I received sight.

Then said they unto him, Where is he ? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.

And it was the sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath-day. Others said, how can a man that is a sinner do such miracles ! And there was a division among them.

They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes ? He said, He is a prophet.

But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.

And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?

His parents answered them, and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age, ask him, he shall speak for himself.

These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was CHRIST, he should be put out of the synagogue.

Therefore said his parents, He is of age, ask him.

Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.

Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?

He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?

Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.

We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.

The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

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Since the world began was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

JESUS heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

He answered and said, Who is he, LORD, that I might believe on him?

And JESUS said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that walketh with thee.

And he said, LORD, I believe. And he worshipped him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Our LORD being come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the dedication of the temple, saw in one of the streets a poor man who was a great object of compassion; nor did he pass him with unfeeling inattention, but regarded him with tender pity. How dreadful must be the condition of a man born blind! Our LORD's disciples supposed, that the blindness of him who attracted their MASTER's regard, was a judgment inflicted by Divine justice; and they put a strange question, *Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?* The Jews had a notion (which they borrowed from the Pythagoreans, a sect of heathen philosophers) that, if a man behaved himself amiss in this world, he was, after death, sent into another body, where he met with great calamities, and lived upon much worse terms than before: and, on the contrary, that distinguished virtue was rewarded with a more advantageous situation. This

was

was a very absurd opinion, and beneath our SAVIOUR'S dignity to refute, as he was not discoursing with heathens; because no such doctrine had been revealed by GOD to the Jews, and human reason alone might discover the inconsistency of it: instead of satisfying their curiosity, he informed them, that the design of the man's being born blind was, that the miraculous power of GOD might be manifested in giving him sight; therefore, it was a peculiar part of his business, as the MESSIAH, to cure him: which he should do, though it was the sabbath-day, notwithstanding it would provoke his enemies to persecute him. Our LORD knew, that the time of his ministry was drawing to a conclusion, and he would lose no opportunity of fulfilling his commission. He had often declared himself to be *the light of the world*; and proved that he was so, both in a natural and a spiritual sense, having restored the eyesight of many, and illuminated the minds of thousands, who were blinded by sin and prejudice.

The circumstances of this miracle were singular and significant; but it is needless to enquire exactly into the meaning of each particular: it is sufficient to remark, that anointing the eyes with clay was, according to the usual course of nature, more likely to blind than to clear the sight; which added to the wonder, and proved that it was *Divine power*, and not any *medicinal* quality in the means our LORD made use of, that effected the cure. The performance of such a miracle must certainly have made a great alteration in the man's appearance; for the eyes are the distinguished ornaments of the human face, and give liveliness and animation to all the rest: yet the man was not so entirely altered, but that he easily convinced his neighbours he was the same person; and his parents acknowledged him

him to be their son, though their sinful timidity restrained them from shewing gratitude to his benefactor.

The members of the Sanhedrim, we find, made very particular enquiries concerning this miracle. They examined every circumstance, and each new witness confirmed the truth of it; yet, instead of acting as became men in authority, and professors of righteousness, they would not hear the voice of reason in our LORD's favour, but proceeded against him with prejudice, malice, and passion. What scandal did they endeavour to throw on our blessed SAVIOUR! We read, that they even made an express law to excommunicate whoever should acknowledge JESUS to be the CHRIST, thus openly rebelling against JEHOVAH and his *anointed One*; but the man who had received the cure, having truth on his side, baffled all the arguments of these learned Pharisees, boldly reprov'd them for their obstinate infidelity, and, in spite of their power, professed himself the disciple of JESUS, because he was convinced that *he came from God*. When the Pharisees found they could not confound the man, nor bring him to their purpose, they resolved that he should feel the effects of their resentment; they, therefore, cast him out of the synagogue, and cut him off from being a member of the church of Israel.

The poor man, whose eyes had never beheld his deliverer, was, as we may suppose, earnestly desirous of an opportunity of expressing his gratitude: and JESUS, to whom every circumstance of his altercation with the Pharisees was known, came forth to meet him; and it is probable intimated to him that he was the person who had cured him. Our LORD resolved to prove his faith, and then to enlighten his understanding. As soon as the man professed his willingness to believe

Believe in the SON of GOD, CHRIST revealed himself to him, and the man acknowledged his Divinity without hesitation, and expressed his belief by humble adoration.

The man who was born blind certainly could not commit sin before he came into the world; and our SAVIOUR expressly declared, that he was not born in that miserable condition, for the punishment of his parents; but that the works of GOD might be manifested in him. Besides it is very reasonable to suppose, that this affliction was in many respects conducive to the man's *spiritual* interest; a sense of his calamity might make him more attentive to the duties of religion, and more solicitous to obtain the favour of GOD, by humility and patient resignation, than he would have been in a happier condition; and the practice of these duties had a natural tendency to mitigate his affliction. But supposing it to have been attended with every uncomfortable circumstance that can possibly be conceived, none can deny that he was amply recompensed by the *knowledge* of SALVATION.

We ought to receive the account of this miracle as a farther proof that our SAVIOUR was the SON of GOD; and from his permitting the man to worship him, we may infer, that he is worthy of *adoration*.

Every Christian is, in a *spiritual* sense, in the condition of a man born blind, and receiving sight by the hand of CHRIST. If this consideration excites our gratitude, how shall we express it? What *homage* short of *adoration* can we offer to the SON of GOD? He who *came forth and proceeded from the FATHER*, to enlighten our minds with Divine knowledge, the benevolent SAVIOUR, who felt as *Man* every tender affection of the human heart, and whose delight is to give happiness!

Let

Let us then, as Christians, take the man born blind for our example, and let us learn from our LORD's *own words*, that it is very wrong to regard any one as a notorious sinner, who meets with an uncommon calamity. Each man's *own conscience* will best teach him in what light to consider his affliction; but charity should incline others to suppose they may be sent as *trials of virtue*.

SECTION LXXXVII.

PREDICTIONS CONCERNING THE GOOD SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL.

From Isaiah, Chap. xl. xli.

* O ZION, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain: O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength: lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your GOD.

Behold, the LORD GOD will come with a strong hand, and his ARM shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

Like a shepherd shall he feed his flock; in his arm shall he gather up the lambs, and he shall bear them in his bosom; the nursing ewes shall he gently lead.

Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand; and meted out the heavens by his span; and

* The two first verses in the above prediction are according to the Bible translation; my reason for giving them so is, that the variations in the Bishop of London's translation are so great, as to require a long note to explain them; besides, the learned prelate has not pointed out who is to be understood by the *strong one*, in the second verse, and I was fearful of giving my own comment on it.

bath.

hath comprehended the dust of the earth in a tierce, and hath weighed in scales the mountains, and the hills in a balance?

Who hath directed the Spirit of JEHOVAH; and, as one of his council, hath informed him?

Whom hath he consulted, that he should instruct him, and teach him the path of judgment; that he should impart to him science, and inform him in the way of understanding?

Behold, the nations are as drop from the bucket; as the small dust of the balance shall they be accounted: behold the islands he taketh up as an atom.

All the nations are as nothing before him; they are esteemed by him as less than nought and vanity.

Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that JEHOVAH is the everlasting God, the creator of the bounds of the earth: that he neither fainteth, nor is wearied; and that his understanding is unsearchable?

Will ye not know? Will ye not hear? Hath it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have ye not understood it from the foundations of the earth?

It is He that sitteth on the circle of the earth; and the inhabitants are to him as grasshoppers: that extendeth the heavens as a thin veil; and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:

That reduceth princes to nothing, that maketh the judges of the earth a mere inanity.

If he but blow upon them, they instantly wither; and the whirlwind shall bear them away like stubble.

He giveth strength to the faint, and to the infirm he multiplieth force; they that trust in JEHOVAH shall gather new strength, they shall put forth fresh feathers like the moulting eagle: they shall run and not be wearied: they shall march onward and not faint.

Let

Let the distant nations repair to me with new force of mind ; and let the people recover their strength.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In the above extract from Isaiah's prophecy it is expressly predicted, that GOD HIMSELF would come and visit his people, and manifest his almighty power by means of his ARM, (that is, as we may judge from other parts of Scripture, his WORD,) who would hold out before him the reward and the recompence, which he intended to bestow on his faithful servants ; that he should not appear in terrible majesty, as on Mount Sinai, but like a *good shepherd*, gathering together all who were willing to be received into his flock ; feeding them with heavenly doctrine, and comforting the faint-hearted. But that the world might not suppose the ALMIGHTY would divest himself of his glorious majesty to effect his purpose, the Prophet was inspired to call to mind the infinite and incomprehensible power and wisdom of the SUPREME BEING ; and how presumptuous it is to judge of his dispensations by the short standard of human abilities ! The LORD, therefore, encouraged the faithful to trust in the completion of his promises, however, *unintelligible* they might appear. How comfortable is it to reflect, as this portion of prophecy suggests, that " the infinite power and unsearchable wisdom of God is unweariedly and everlastingly engaged in strengthening, comforting, and saving his people ! It is impossible to read this description of God, the most sublime that ever was penned, without being struck with inexpressible reverence and self-abasement at the contrast between the Great JEHOVAH and every thing reputed great in this world, how admirably imagined, how exquisitely finished ! What atoms and inanities are they

all

are they all before him, who sitteth on the circle of the immense heavens, and views the potentates of the earth in the light of the grass-hoppers; those poor insects that wander over the barren heath for sustenance, spend the day in insignificant chirpings, and take up their contemptible lodging at night on a blade of grass *!" We will now see what *Ezekiel* prophesied concerning the shepherds or teachers of Israel.

SECTION LXXXVIII.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF EZEKIEL.

From Ezekiel, Chap. xxxiv.

AND the word of the LORD came unto Ezekiel, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the LORD unto the shepherds, Wo be to the shepherds of Israel, that do feed themselves: should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe yourselves with the wool: ye kill them that are fed; but ye feed not the flock.

The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and cruelty have ye ruled them.

And they were scattered because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.

* Dr. Smith's Summary View.

My sheep wandereth through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD.

As I live, saith the LORD GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock:

Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD.

Thus saith the LORD GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock, neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.

I will save my flock, and they shall be no more a prey, and I will judge between cattle and cattle.

And I will set upon one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

And I the LORD will be their GOD, and my servant David a prince among them. I the LORD have spoken, and I will make with them a covenant of peace.

Thus shall they know, that I the LORD their GOD am with them.

And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your GOD, saith the LORD GOD *.

* The intermediate verses of this chapter are omitted here, as they seem to relate solely to the final restoration of Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Taken in a spiritual sense, this prediction agrees with our LORD'S constant description of the Scribes and Pharisees; it may therefore be applied to them, though originally addressed to the teachers of Israel, who, in the days of Ezekiel, suffered the people, through their carelessness, to be tempted by the surrounding nations to idolatrous practices. The doctrine of *traditions* was as subversive of the true religion as worshipping idols; therefore those who were persuaded to adopt them, were equally led astray.

From comparing this Section with the former one, concerning the *good shepherd*, we learn, that the ARM of the LORD was to be united with a prince of the house of David; which union certainly subsisted in the person of JESUS CHRIST; but let us now read what our Blessed LORD himself declared concerning the good shepherd.

SECTION LXXXIX.

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

From John, Chap. x.

AND JESUS said, For judgment I am come into this world: that they which see not, might see; and that they which see, might be made blind.

And some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?

JESUS said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not
by

by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other way, ~~the same~~ is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door, is the shepherd of the sheep.

To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he ~~call~~eth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

And a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

~~For~~ All that ever came before me, are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them.

I am the door: by me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

As

As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?

Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil? Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The discourse between our SAVIOUR and the man born blind, which we lately read *, is supposed to have passed in private: but it seems that a number of persons soon assembled about him, when he took occasion to speak of the judicial power with which he was invested, to be exerted agreeably to the will of God, and declared the principal end of his coming to be, that ignorant souls, who were willing to learn, might be instructed in Divine truths; and that such as were proudly conceited of their own wisdom, and wilfully opposed his doctrine, might involve themselves in still greater darkness.

The Pharisees, by their question, *Are we blind also?*

* See latter end of Section lxxxvi.

meant to draw from him some censure upon the Sanhedrim. Our LORD wisely defeated their design by replying, that if they had been *unavoidably ignorant*, they would have had no sin in this case; but that their *unwillingness to be convinced* was a great crime, and prevented their having a knowledge of the truth.

We must observe, that the Pharisees and Scribes pretended they were the true pastors of the church, and that JESUS was an impostor; and insisted, that the people were bound in duty to adhere to them, and oppose him. To rectify this mistake, our LORD spake a parable*, the design of which was to shew how far the Pharisees, who assumed the name of pastors, were from answering the character of good teachers; and to warn persons of real integrity and simplicity, of the danger of being blindly governed and guided by them. By calling himself the *door*, in the following part of his discourse, our LORD intimated, that as a shepherd must pass through the door in order to make a regular and unsuspected entrance into a sheepfold, so every true teacher in the church must pass, as it were, *through him*, or his *authority*, into his office, and teach such doctrine as he should appoint. Our LORD affirmed, that all who before him had pretended to be the MESSIAH were impostors, and pious persons had disregarded them; and that they might do so in future he repeated, that the only way to salvation was through him; and he promised that all who would submit to his care and guidance, should be fed and nourished with true doctrine and substantial happiness; as the end of his coming was to make a plentiful provision for their everlasting felicity, far beyond what had ever been known before. Our LORD then changed the similitude, and represented himself as the *good Shepherd*: which was, in

* Doddridge's Family Expositor.

fact, declaring, that he was the MESSIAH, or the ARM of the LORD, united to the *prince of David's race*, who was to make a covenant of peace with the world, and call the teachers of Israel to account for their perverted doctrine, covetousness, and deceit.

Our LORD having declared himself to be the good Shepherd, proceeded to assert his intimate knowledge of the FATHER, which implied a constant union with the GODHEAD. He then foretold the calling of the Gentiles into his church; intimating, that his pastoral care was not confined to the Jewish nation, but, on the contrary extended to his *sheep*, wheresoever dispersed. By his *sheep* we may understand all who were or should be desirous of knowing the truth, and willing to do their duty; these by the aid of Divine grace, when the Gospel should be offered to them, would easily discern its excellency and embrace its doctrines. Our LORD encouraged his faithful people to love him, by assuring them that he would lay down his life, to purchase salvation for them. This, he informed them, would be received as an eminent act of duty by his FATHER, who had appointed this sacrifice, and ordained that he should have power to *renew* his life. Our LORD declared, that it was not in the power of any man to kill him, unless he *voluntarily* submitted to death, as he had in *himself* the principle of life, from his union with God; which Divine principle, in order to reward his obedience, would remain with his soul even in the place of the dead, and enable it to re-animate his body. This extraordinary declaration of our LORD's, occasioned great divisions; some, blinded by prejudice, treated him as a madman; while others, who were rational and willing to be convinced, discerned the divine energy of his words.

How delightful it is to contemplate our SAVIOUR as
the

the Shepherd of our souls, and to think that he will continue his care to the end of the world! Let us then acknowledge him, as he was acknowledged by the FATHER, and be ready to lay down our lives rather than forsake him. We are ourselves living proofs of the faithfulness of his gracious promise, "that he would bring other sheep besides the Israelites into the fold," being descended from the *Gentiles*, who were not originally of his flock. Let us, therefore, improve the glorious advantage, and pray that those who yet remain unconverted may be received also into CHRIST's flock; that all may be *one fold* under one shepherd, who will lead them through the paths of righteousness to the regions of bliss.

SECTION XC.

JESUS AT THE FEAST OF DEDICATION DECLARES
THAT HE IS THE CHRIST.

From John, Chap. x.

AND it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And JESUS walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.

Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the CHRIST, tell us plainly.

JESUS answered them, I told you, and ye believed not. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not; because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and

they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.

My father who gave them me is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy, and because that thou being a man, makest thyself God.

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?

If ye called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken:

Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.

Therefore they sought again to take him; but he escaped out of their hand, and went away again beyond Jordan, into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The feast of the dedication, observed by the Jews,
was

was instituted by Judas Maccabeus *, in memory of the purification of the temple, after it had been polluted by the idolatries and impieties of Antiochus Epiphanes. Solomon's porch was a large portico leading to the Temple, originally built by Solomon, part of which continued in the second Temple, and was called by his name.

It must have been with an invidious design, that the Pharisees expressed their desire for our LORD's declaring himself to be the MESSIAH; for had they really wished to know him as such, his calling himself the *good Shepherd* was sufficient. Our SAVIOUR appealed to his miracles, and then keeping up the similitude of a shepherd, assigned the reason of their infidelity to be want of sincerity and humility. Many who followed him entered into the spiritual meaning of his discourses, because they were accustomed to lend a willing ear to his instructions, and knew that they were such as no other person could give; to these he promised the inestimable gift of eternal life, with an assurance, that no outward violence should prevail against them, or force them out of his fold, as they would be constantly strengthened and protected by the FATHER.

Having promised eternal life as *his own gift*, our LORD proceeded to explain how he came to be possessed of the power to bestow it, namely, by his union with the FATHER. His expression is very strong, *I and my FATHER are one*; and it is plain that he meant it to be taken in a literal sense, because, when the Jews were going to stone him, and accused him of making himself God, he did not deny the assertion, but, with the utmost mildness, appealed to his works, which evidently

* See Supplement to Vol. IV.

manifested Divine power; and being perfectly righteous, shewed that he must possess Divine wisdom and goodness: and, lest they should imagine he called himself GOD in the same sense as princes and governors had borne the title (because in their respective jurisdictions they had supreme power), our LORD pointed out his own superiority, and shewed how unreasonable it was to style them gods who were mere men, and deny him the title of the Son of GOD, who was so truly GOD by the union of the DIVINE WORD, and the HOLY SPIRIT abiding with him. Our LORD then again appealed to his works, as evidences of his union with GOD; and shewed, that he did not mean to ascribe Divinity to his *human nature*, but to the GODHEAD dwelling in him.

The place our LORD retired to was Bethabara, where John had preached in the beginning of his ministry: the inhabitants of this country seem to have retained a strong impression of the Baptist's prediction, that * "he who came after him should be greater than himself;" and willingly acknowledged CHRIST's superiority to him, as John performed no miracle. They also compared our SAVIOUR's actions with the testimony of John, which convinced them that he was the MESSIAH; and they gladly embraced the opportunity of hearing his doctrine, and professing their faith in him.

"What prudence †, mingled with sweetness, runs through our LORD's answers to the Pharisees! What inestimable blessings does he propose to invite men into his fold! Let us never lose sight of them, but resolve to obey his precepts, and follow him wherever he shall lead us, either by his example or his doctrine: then may

* See Sect. xvii. xix. and xxi. † Doddridge's Family Expositor:

we look on our eternal happiness as perfectly secure, for he and the father are *one* : the enemies of our salvation must therefore triumph over omnipotence itself, before they can wrest the sheep of CHRIST from his hand : nor will his fidelity to GOD, or his love for mankind, suffer any to seduce them by fraud, or destroy them by violence." What a picture of pride, cruelty, and injustice, is exhibited in the virulence of the Pharisees against JESUS ! While he was shewing them the path of life, they were contriving his death, and that in the very temple, thus proving themselves to be the genuine offspring of those who slew the Prophet and Priest of the LORD even on his altar ; but our SAVIOUR'S wise and gentle reply baffled their malice for the present, and his Divine power protected him from their rage.

In this instance our LORD has left a valuable lesson to all his followers, those in particular who are exposed to persecution on account of their religion ; and it may also be extended to the common affairs of life, for calm dispassionate reasoning will always have great advantages over prejudice and ill-nature.

SECTION XCI.

LITTLE CHILDREN BROUGHT TO CHRIST.—HIS BE-NEVOLENT RECEPTION OF THEM.

From Mark, Chap. x.

* AND they brought unto him also infants, that he

* Here should have been inserted our Lord's discourse on divorces and adultery, recorded in the sixth chapter of St. Matthew, and the xth of St. Mark ; but as my work is principally intended for young persons, I have, for reasons which actuated me on a former occasion, omitted it. Let me however earnestly exhort all who are of age to comprehend the import of them, seriously to peruse them in the Bible, and consider with what solemnity our Lord forbids the violation of the marriage vow.

might put his hands on them and pray, and his disciples rebuked them.

But when **JESUS** saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of **GOD**.

Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of **GOD** as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

And he took them in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We may regard the account here given of our **SAVIOUR**'s compassionate and tender behaviour to young children, as a completion of that part of **ISAIAH**'s prophecy, which describes the good Shepherd of **ISRAEL** gathering the lambs in his arms, and carrying them in his bosom *.

It was a custom among the Jews, to present their children to illustrious persons remarkable for their piety, that they might lay their hands upon them, and recommend them to **GOD**'s favour by their prayers †.

The parents of those who were brought to **CHRIST** certainly entertained such an opinion of him, and regarded him as the **MESSIAH**.

The disciples probably had several reasons for rebuking those who brought their infants. It seems that they were at that particular time conversing with their **LORD** upon an important subject, and full of attention to his doctrine; and they might be offended at the importunity of those persons who interrupted the discourse.

* See Section **LXXXVII**.

† See **Dr. Jortin's Sermons**.

They might also think such actions as laying his hands on young children beneath the dignity of their Master, as he came into the world to instruct *men*, and perform many wonderful works; and perhaps they imagined that those persons would be unwelcome to him, as he was so much taken up with higher employments. Whatever was their motive for driving them away, our LORD was much displeased that his late instructions* were so soon forgotten: he therefore reprovèd them with holy anger; and again repeated, that "whosoever would enter the kingdom of heaven must humble himself, and become like little children;" taking this occasion to acquaint those who were present with some of the qualifications necessary for those who should join themselves to him.

Encouraged by his gracious permission to approach him, each mother (as we may suppose) pressed forward to offer her child to his hands. The babe, unable to distinguish the embraces of its SAVIOUR from those of the parent, lifted up a cry of supplication for its usual food; or, delighted with the amiable benignity of our LORD's countenance, courted his tenderness by engaging smiles. With affection, exceeding that of the fondest mother, he folded these tender lambs to his bosom, promising to feed them with the milk of the Gospel, to protect them in their infant years with the arms of his mercy, and to reward them with eternal life, if they continued to live as the children of God; then delivering them to their happy mothers, he probably turned his eyes on other children, who being old enough to repeat what their parents taught them, were kneeling at his feet imploring his benediction. Though they could scarcely articulate, and knew not the full import of their

* See Section lxx.

own petitions, their lisping accents found a ready acceptance, and he blessed them also : for innocence, seconded by their parents' prayers, prevailed in their behalf. If there were, as is most likely, among this little flock, any who had attained to years of reason, and were capable of forming wishes and petitions for themselves, they without doubt shared our LORD's kindness, and in consequence of their prayers and earnest desire of instruction, were encouraged to expect the aid of Divine grace, to enable them both to know and practise their duty, and preserve them from the dangers of the world.

How properly did the parents of these children act, in thus seeking to promote the eternal welfare of their beloved offspring from their very birth ! How lovely did the children themselves appear, who willingly yielded to the commands of their parents, and sought their SAVIOUR's blessing, before the world with its vain delusions had taken possession of their hearts !

Surely every parent who reads the history of this memorable transaction must wish for the same advantage ; and every child must desire to be thus received by its SAVIOUR. How thankful, therefore, ought all to be, that they are furnished with the means of obtaining his gracious benediction ! Though our LORD's personal presence is withdrawn, he continues to behold with kindness all who seek his favour. Let parents, therefore, with holy confidence present their children to him, and make it the first object of paternal care to secure for them, by inculcating the principles of religion, *an eternal inheritance which fadeth not away.* And let those who are incapable of instructing their offspring themselves, accept with thankfulness the opportunity which these times afford, of having them taught by means of the excellent institution of *Sunday* and other charity *Schools.*

Schools. The general solicitude which is shewn by many persons in the higher classes of society, for cultivating the knowledge of Christianity among the lower orders of people, must kindle in the mind of every sincere Christian the most delightful hopes.

SECTION XCII.

A RICH YOUNG MAN COMES TO CHRIST FOR INSTRUCTION.—OUR LORD'S DISCOURSE CONCERNING RICHES.

From Mark, Chap. x. — Matt. xix.

AND when JESUS was gone forth in the way, there came a certain ruler and kneeled to him, and asked, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

And JESUS said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

He saith unto him, Which? JESUS said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness;

Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?

Then JESUS beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast; and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come take up the cross, and follow me.

And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

And JESUS looked round about, and saith unto his

disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answered again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God!

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God!

And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

And Jesus looking upon them, saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee: what shall we have therefore?

And Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The young ruler who came to CHRIST seems to have been very solicitous about his future state, and came to our LORD as a prophet, to enquire the way to heaven. Jesus knowing that he only considered him as an inspired teacher, asked him why he called him good? As a mere master or instructor, no one could be absolutely good;

good; therefore our LORD would not appropriate to his *human nature*, a title which belonged to GOD alone. Had the young ruler fully considered our SAVIOUR's character and miracles, his own reason would have supplied him with a ready answer; and he would have replied, "LORD, I call thee *good*, because thou art truly the *Son of GOD* in union with the FATHER;" it appears, therefore, that he entertained an erroneous opinion of CHRIST. We may also judge from our LORD's next question to this young man, that he had a mistaken notion of his own righteousness, and supposed that the mere observance of moral duties would entitle him to everlasting life. This question he answered without hesitation; for in respect to mankind, his conduct had been just and upright; and so far our LORD approved him, and felt in his soul a benevolent desire that he might be saved, and a compassionate sorrow that he would miss of heaven*: therefore he stood still, and entertained him with friendly discourse; in which our LORD endeavoured by proper methods to convince him of sin, directed him what to do in order to obtain treasure in heaven, called him to be his disciple and follower, and gave him a promise of everlasting riches, if he would comply with his proposal: but though our LORD on this occasion indulged the kind affections of humanity, which were awakened by the many amiable qualities of this young man, he was still mindful of the honour of his FATHER, and did not communicate Divine grace to him, nor promise him salvation, because he was not a proper object of Divine complacency, as he defrauded GOD of his due, by placing his love on riches. There was no other way of disengaging his mind from the subject which at present oc-

* See an excellent Discourse on this subject by Dr. Watts, which ought to be read by every young person.

cupied it, to the exclusion of true piety, but by divesting himself of those great possessions which made him forgetful of Divine providence, and careless of obtaining God's favour. It seems, at first sight, very unreasonable to desire a man, who was in an eminent station and affluent circumstances, to sell his estate and divide the product amongst the poor, and expose himself to many calamities: but it will strike us differently, if we reflect on the happy consequences his obedience would have been productive of to him, and the inconveniences which would have attended the keeping his possessions till the time of persecution, if he became a professed disciple of CHRIST; as the higher his station, and the greater his possessions, the more would be the malice and rage of his enemies against him. Great estates, so far from being advantageous to the first propagators of the Gospel, would have been incumbrances and impediments to the possessors of them, had they returned them, as they were under the necessity of removing from place to place, and could not attend to the management of them, without neglecting the peculiar duties assigned to the immediate disciples and successors of their LORD. It was much more convenient and expedient for each to sell his possessions, in order to make a common purse for the daily and occasional relief of any of the community who should stand in need of it: without doubt, all who contributed were allowed a supply for their own natural wants.

By "entering into the kingdom of heaven," is here meant embracing the profession of the Gospel; to which an attachment to worldly riches and honours seems to have been a great discouragement.

Our LORD's discourse was so different from the sentiments which the Jews in general entertained, and their doctors taught, concerning temporal blessings; that his

his disciples were quite astonished; but to prevent their thinking that the mere *possession* of riches would disqualify any one from being a member of the kingdom, he informed them that the danger arose from placing a vain trust and confidence in riches, instead of relying on Divine Providence; and to guard the minds of his followers from the desire of wealth, he assured them, that it was as impossible for any one who placed his hopes of happiness on riches, to be at the same time a member of the kingdom of heaven, as for a camel (or, as some translate it, *a cable*) to go through the eye of a needle. The wonder of his disciples increased at hearing it was so hard for rich persons, who had the greatest opportunities of doing good, to enter into the kingdom of God; and knowing that there was a general desire among all ranks of people to obtain riches, they concluded that few could hope for salvation: our LORD, therefore, proceeded to inform them, that though the strength of nature alone was not sufficient to overcome the temptations of a state of affluence, God's grace was powerful enough to render the rich superior to the dangers of situation; and he had repeatedly declared, that his FATHER would bestow his grace on all who were truly desirous of his favour, and obedient to his revealed will: so that, let a man's circumstances in life be what they would, he might obtain salvation, if he were properly disposed to receive it.

As our LORD promised the rich young ruler, that if he would *sell* all his worldly possessions and follow him, he would give him treasures in heaven; Peter, in the name of himself, and all the rest of the Apostles, enquired what recompence they might expect, who had left all their worldly pursuits and connexions to devote themselves to his services? There was in Peter's question

an appearance of vain-glory; yet our LORD kindly overlooked it, knowing that true piety and faith were deeply rooted in his heart, though he was still subject to human infirmities: he, therefore, graciously replied, that his Apostles should, at the renovation of all things, when he should come in his glory, be distinguished with peculiar honour in heaven. What was particularly meant by *their sitting on twelve thrones, &c.* is not clearly understood, neither doth it concern the generality of Christians: but all may take comfort from our LORD's assurance, that whosoever suffers in any way for the sake of his religion, shall in the midst of persecution, enjoy such inward consolation, as will be greatly more than an equivalent for all their worldly losses, and in a future state be rewarded with everlasting life and happiness.

Let us now carry our thoughts back to the rich ruler, and see what instruction we can collect from his example.

It is said that our SAVIOUR *loved him* *. From this circumstance we learn, that it is very wrong utterly to despise and hate any one, because he has some ill qualities. Our LORD's rejection of him teaches us, that the mere observance of moral duties will not procure us eternal life; but those who prefer worldly riches to spiritual treasures will remain in a state of condemnation, for GOD will not bestow his grace on them. Neither is it sufficient to seek eternal life for a season; we must be earnest and constant in the pursuit of it, and seek it in GOD's *appointed way, according to the rules of the Gospel*. It is, therefore, the interest of every one to devote their natural endowments or acquired excellencies of body and mind to the service of GOD, as far as their condition in life requires.

* See Dr. Watts's Sermon before referred to.

As sweetness of temper and obliging behaviour render a person beloved, and will answer many valuable purposes to society, they should be cultivated by Christians: and they must not stop here, but endeavour to make themselves acceptable to God, which can only be effected by becoming the true disciples of his blessed Son.

Since riches have so many temptations, no Christian should be solicitous to accumulate them; but if wealth is a portion allotted us by Divine Providence, we should remember from whence it comes, and the use we are required to make of it; and then, instead of being a snare and obstruction to our entrance into the kingdom of heaven, it will prove a real blessing, and be a means of procuring us a more glorious station in those blessed regions.

SECTION XCH.

THE PARABLE OF THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD.

From Matt. Chap. xix, xx.

But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an housholder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

And

And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

They say unto him, because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more, and they likewise received every man a penny.

And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house,

Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny?

Take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own: is thine eye evil, because I am good?

So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Our LORD having in the last Section promised his Apostles that they should sit upon twelve thrones in heaven, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, proceeded to obviate a mistake into which he knew some would fall,
that

that those who were first called to the knowledge of **CHRIST** should have the pre-eminence in glory; and intimated God's rejection of the Jews, to whom the Gospel was first preached, and his acceptance of the Gentiles, by declaring, that many who were first in respect to advantages would be the last to improve them; whilst others, from whom it would be the least expected, would embrace the Gospel, and be received as members of his kingdom. To illustrate this, our **LORD** spake the parable of the labourers in the vineyard; the principal intent of which, was to shew, that the Gentiles, though newly called, should enjoy as great privileges as the Jews, who had so long been distinguished as the peculiar people of God. If we reflect on the history of the Jews, we shall be ready to allow, that it was perfectly consistent with the justice of God to put the Gentiles on a level with them. This his infinite goodness has completely effected; for the descendants of Jewish and Gentile converts are so blended, that all distinction is lost between them, and they are now fellow-labourers in the vineyard of God, under the name of **CHRISTIANS**. It no longer remains a question who is first or last amongst them in respect to birth-right, but who shall have the preference with God on account of their diligence in improving the means of salvation.

The work required of all who bear the name of *Christians*, is the cultivation of their own minds in religious attainments, in order to glorify God, and an attention to the good of their fellow-creatures. If those to whom the Gospel has been made known are idle and remiss, they have not the same excuse as the heathen formerly had; but as it frequently happens that persons, through a neglected education and bad connections, remain in ignorance of their duty, till they are far

far advanced in life, such, when they sincerely resolve to live a Christian life, may derive encouragement from our LORD's assurance, that "*many who are last shall be first.*" Whilst others, who have, from their very infancy, enjoyed every advantage, may learn to improve them, in order that they may appear among the happy number of those who are not only *called* but *chosen*.

We must not infer from this parable, that an *equal reward* awaits *all* who profess Christianity without any regard to their character or improvements, or that we may safely defer the reformation of our lives to advanced age. There can be no excuse for neglect of duty, but unavoidable ignorance of it. It has pleased GOD to set a reward before us, though we can claim nothing from him as our *due*, but through his infinite goodness; which may be compared, as in the foregoing parable to the benevolence of a man of independent fortune, who employs poor people merely to keep them from idleness, and then pays them for working for themselves. Who, in such a case, would not exert his utmost industry with thankfulness of heart? Surely, then, Christians ought to be equally vigilant, and acknowledge with the deepest gratitude the unmerited kindness of the SUPREME BEING, submitting to all his dispensations, without repining at the superior advantages which others may seem to enjoy, since each has much more than he has any natural right to expect.

The Roman penny was equal to seven pence half-penny of our money, which is supposed to have been at that time the usual price for day-labourers. The third hour was about nine o'clock in the morning, the sixth twelve at noon, the ninth three in the afternoon, the eleventh five in the evening.

SECTION XCIV.

JESUS RAISETH LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD.

From John, Chap. xi.

Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

(It was that Mary which anointed the LORD with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, LORD, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

When JESUS heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of GOD, that the Son of GOD might be glorified thereby.

Now JESUS loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

Then after that, saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again.

His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?

JESUS answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

These things said he: and after that, he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

Then said his disciples, LORD, If he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit JESUS spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

Then

Then said JESUS unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there (to the intent ye may believe), nevertheless let us go unto him.

Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

Then when JESUS came, he found that he had lien in the grave four days already.

(Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.)

And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

Then Martha, as soon as she heard that JESUS was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.

Then said Martha unto JESUS, LORD, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of GOD, GOD will give it thee.

JESUS saith unto her, thy brother shall rise again.

Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

JESUS said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?

She saith unto him, Yea, LORD: I believe that thou art the CHRIST the son of GOD, which should come into the world.

And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.

Now JESUS was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

The Jews then which were with her in the house and comforted her, when they saw Mary that she rose up hastily, and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave, to weep there.

Then when Mary was come where JESUS was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him,

LORD, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

When JESUS therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, LORD, come and see.

JESUS wept.

Then said the Jews, Behold, how he loved him!

And some of them said, Could not this man which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

JESUS therefore again groaning in himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

JESUS said, Take ye away the stone, Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, LORD, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days.

JESUS saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And JESUS lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me.

And

And I knew that thou hearest me always : but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe thou hast sent me.

And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes ; and his face was bound about with a napkin. JESUS saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which JESUS did, believed on him.

But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things JESUS had done.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

St. John in this Section referred to an act, performed by Mary, *after* the raising of Lazarus, but long before the Evangelist composed his Gospel ; which being publicly known, served the purpose of pointing out to the Jews the identical family in which this event happened, in case they should think fit to make any farther enquiries into the matter.

The friendship which our LORD entertained for Lazarus and his sisters, evinces that his mind was susceptible of this tender affection of human nature, and it also reflects great honour on those for whom he indulged it ; as his preference was not only founded upon *reason*, but his choice regulated by the Divine knowledge which he had of the real disposition of every heart. Had our

LORD

LORD followed the dictates of his *humanity*, he would, without doubt, have hastened to save his friend from the agonies of death, and restore the afflicted sisters to peace and tranquillity; but knowing that the glory of **GOD** would be more fully displayed if he deferred his visit, he resolved to do so; and give the mourners, in the mean time, an opportunity of testifying their *faith in him*, and their *patience and resignation* to the *Divine will*, that they might be the better prepared to rejoice in **GOD's** mercy afterwards.

The answer our **LORD** made to him who brought the message concerning the sickness of Lazarus, though ambiguous, was calculated to afford consolation. We must recollect, that on our **SAVIOUR's** declaring himself publicly as the **MESSIAH**, at the Feast of the Dedication, the Jews sought to stone him, on which he retired from *Judea*: when, therefore, he proposed to return thither again, without mentioning the particular purpose he had in view, his disciples were greatly alarmed for his safety, and began to expostulate with him on the danger of such an undertaking; but our **LORD** intimated that he was, by his fore-knowledge of events, thoroughly prepared for every obstacle he should meet with; and, as the **FATHER** had given him an *appointed time* for his ministry, he was determined to perform all that was required of him; since he might as safely continue his work, as a man could walk about his usual business in the open day-light. Without this Divine knowledge indeed, he would have been liable to error; but thus enlightened, they might assure themselves he should take no improper measure. In this manner our **LORD** prepared the minds of the Apostles for what he yet thought proper to conceal.

Though our **LORD** was so many miles distant from
 VOL. V. T Bethany,

Bethany, he perfectly knew what passed there; and, to convince his disciples that he did so, he informed them of the death of *Lazarus*. His reasons for representing it as a sleep from which he would soon awaken him are obvious: but it is wonderful to observe, that his Apostles, who were so accustomed to his manner of speaking, should be perpetually mistaking his meaning. He certainly *could* have enlightened their minds, but, by leaving them to themselves in this manner, he had an opportunity of conveying, in his answers to their questions, instructions suited to the comprehension of the meanest capacities.

It was undoubtedly more conducive to the *faith* of his disciples, for *JESUS* to be absent from Bethany when *Lazarus* died, as it would have been a great discouragement to them, had he refused to exert his miraculous power to save the life of a person so tenderly beloved; nor could he, consistently with his usual kindness, have resisted the entreaties of his sorrowing friend to restore him immediately. Our *LORD* knew the strength of every mind, and never put any one to a greater trial than he was able to bear.

When *Thomas* found that his dear Master was determined to expose himself again to the malice of his foes, he affectionately exhorted his fellow disciples to attend him in all dangers, resolving himself rather to die than desert him. As Bethany was within two miles of *Jerusalem*, *Lazarus* was well known in that city, and had many friends there; these, according to the usual custom of the Jews, came to comfort his sisters, but *Martha* and *Mary* still expected with impatience the only friend who could afford them real consolation: when therefore *Martha* was informed of our *LORD*'s approach, she, with that impetuosity which was natural to her temper,
hastened

hastened to meet him, not waiting to inform her sister of it: her tender expostulations with our LORD for his delay, were the natural effusions of a heart overwhelmed with grief for the loss of a dear brother; he therefore excused the abruptness of them, since her faith was not shaken, and she trusted to him for comfort and relief in her present distress. As *Lazarus* had been buried so long, *Martha* was apprehensive that she mistook our LORD's meaning, and that his promise of raising her brother referred to the *general resurrection*; but he informed her, that he had *in himself a principle of life*, and *through him* the resurrection of the dead would be effected that he could communicate eternal life to every soul which believed on him, so that it should be preserved even in a state of separation from the body; and, during this mortal life, should enjoy a comfortable assurance of remaining safe from destruction to endless ages. To this declaration of our LORD's *Martha* gave a ready assent; and we may conclude, inferred from it, that he who, as the SON of GOD, possessed an unlimited power of communicating and preserving life, could at *any time* raise her brother; she therefore went to call her sister. When *Mary* heard that JESUS was come, her sorrow was instantly suspended; she suppressed her rising sobs, she wiped away the falling tears, and gave up her mind to enlivening hope, which whispered to her heart that he was come to bring a blessing. With affectionate haste she flew to meet him, and, as soon as she came to the place where he waited for her, she threw herself at his feet with the utmost respect and veneration; intending, as it seems, to implore his benediction; but the idea of her brother, which every fresh object, from some circumstance or other, awakened, returned to her mind; and *Mary*, like her sister *Martha*, pathetically lamented that his

honoured friend had not been present to save him. When JESUS beheld the overflowing grief of this truly amiable woman, and the sorrow of her surrounding friends, his heart melted with tender pity; and, though he had every passion at command, he *willingly* made himself a partner in their affliction: nor did THE FATHER disapprove his sympathizing kindness, but graciously received his *groans* as *intercessions* in behalf of the mourners: and JESUS, knowing his blessed will, with amiable impatience to execute it, demanded, *Where they had lain Lazarus?* As he approached the sepulchre (it seems) a variety of reflections on the calamities of human life, and the obstinacy of those who refused salvation, occupied his benevolent mind; nor did THE FATHER check these emotions, but permitted his beloved SON to feel such pungent sorrow for the human race, as tears only could express. The Jews who attended attributed this distress entirely to his affection for *Lazarus*; and some, who had a secret aversion to CHRIST, drew an invidious inference, from his not preventing the death of *Lazarus*, that he had not really given sight to the man born blind. Instead of confuting their malicious insinuations, our LORD lamented their obduracy, and again *groaned* with heart-rending anguish, for the sins and follies of mankind: then resuming the dignity of the SON of GOD, he ordered preparations for the miracle he was about to perform. That all the company might be convinced *Lazarus* was actually dead, JESUS caused the stone to be rolled away from the mouth of the cave, in order to exhibit the body; which, it is likely, was in such a state of putrefaction as usually takes place in a very short time after death. *Martha*, whose mind seems to have been in great emotion at the sight of the grave, inconsiderately objected to the removal of the stone:

till

till Jesus reminded her of his late promise. As soon as his commands were executed, our LORD addressed himself to THE FATHER in a thanksgiving, by which he expressed a firm assurance of effecting the miracle: not that he had occasion to pray for the aid of Divine power on *every occasion*, but he chose to point out to the people that there was a real and constant communication between him and THE FATHER. Our LORD could have raised Lazarus by a *silent* exertion of Divine power: but it seems to have been the original institution of GOD, that the dead should *hear the voice* of his only beloved SON: for we may remark, that when CHRIST restored the daughter of Jairus, and the widow's son, he *called* them back to life. In the case of *Lazarus*, our LORD proceeded with unusual majesty and solemnity; every action was calculated to excite attention: at length, when expectation was at the height, he cried with a loud voice, that all might hear, "LAZARUS, COME FORTH!" In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the wonderful change took place; the body was restored to health and soundness, the soul resumed its former seat, the grave clothes loosened as far as was requisite, and LAZARUS CAME FORTH! Without doubt every spectator was struck with astonishment at beholding him; in order, therefore, to convince them that it was no delusion of fancy, our LORD commanded them to free Lazarus from the incumbrance of the linen, in which his limbs, according to the custom of the Jews, were wrapped, that they might satisfy themselves it was really he, and that he might be at liberty to walk home. Let us imagine to ourselves the joy which now filled this happy family, so lately the scene of sorrow and lamentation. Martha, we may conceive, expressed her thankfulness in exclamations of joy,

joy, whilst Mary prostrated herself with humble gratitude at the feet of her kind benefactor. Lazarus, convinced that what had passed would prove conducive to the glory of God, and the happiness of his friends, was reconciled to life, and was contented to bear a little longer the infirmities of human nature ; since he was convinced that the soul *could exist* after the death of the body, and his Divine friend would never forsake him. This miracle was an incontestible proof of our LORD's mission, and many received it as such. It is surprising to think that any should resist such forcible conviction ; but some there were who, with incorrigible hardness of heart, confirmed our LORD's former remark, *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

The portion of sacred writ we have been considering abounds with instruction. From the sickness and death of Lazarus, and the consequent affliction of his sisters, we learn, that the best people are liable to personal and domestic evils ; but they will ultimately promote the glory of God, and the eternal happiness of those who submit to them properly. If relief and consolation are delayed, they may be certain it is for some good purpose, and should therefore wait with patience and resignation. No dangers or difficulties could intimidate our LORD from pursuing the work appointed for him by the FATHER. We should endeavour to imitate his blessed example to the utmost of our power, and perform the duties of life with steadiness and intrepidity, whilst we have opportunity ; then, when the night of death comes, we may close our eyes in peace, in full assurance that our LORD will awaken us at the last day. Let us, then, attach ourselves to his service with the same affection as St. Thomas did.

If we accustom ourselves to contemplate our SAVIOUR as *the Resurrection and the Life*, it will greatly moderate our grief for the loss of friends, whom we may then expect to meet again with joy.

As our blessed REDEEMER himself *wept* when he saw the tears of others, though he was going to wipe them away, we should sympathize in the afflictions of our friends, and not flee, as many do, from all scenes of sorrow and distress.—Numbers of those, who came to comfort Martha and Mary, were converted to the faith of CHRIST; and, without the aid of a miracle, those who go to the house of mourning, may derive spiritual benefit to themselves.



END OF THE FIFTH VOLUME.













